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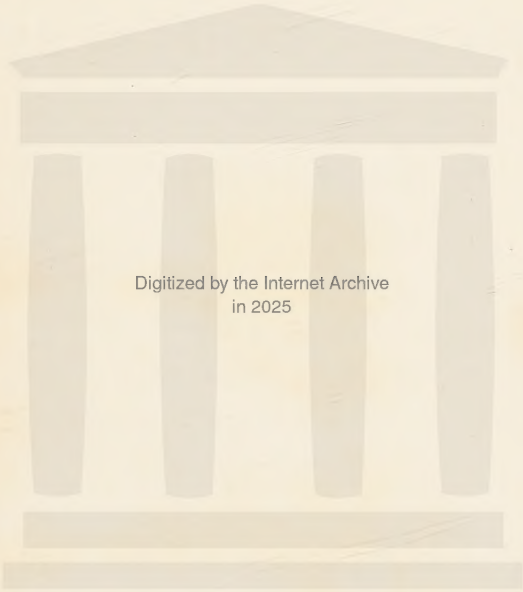
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CONTENTS OF VOL. XII.

	Page.
The Duty of Promoting Christianity by the Circulation of Books,	1
The Future Life,	25
Repentance the Ground of Forgiveness,	49
The Worship of the Father a Service of Gratitude and Joy,	69
Reason and Revelation,	117
Fidelity in Duty, not Accuracy in Belief, our test of the Christian Character,	137
The Unitarian Reform,	153
Truths Joined by God not to be Sundered by Man,	169
On the Atonement,	189
Unitarianism Vindicated against the Charge of Skeptical Tendencies,	245
Remarks on the Sacred Scriptures, and on Belief and Unbelief,	273
The Fourteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 29, 1839.	301

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THE

DUTY OF PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY

BY THE

CIRCULATION OF BOOKS.

By HENRY WARE, Jr.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

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PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY

BY THE

CIRCULATION OF BOOKS.

ECCLESIASTES, XI, 6.

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

IN addressing a society which has for its object the promotion of religion by the circulation of books, one is naturally led to remark the relation which exists between religion and letters, and the consequent aid which is derived to religion from the operations of the press. Revealed religion has from the beginning been united with letters. Both the Jewish and Christian systems, instead of being entrusted solely to vocal teaching and popular or sacerdotal tradition, were secured in a permanent form by written documents. The law of Moses was a written law. Its ministers formed the learned class of the community; its acts of religious faith and devotion were not more essentially set forth in the sacrifices of the altar.

and the pomp of the temple, than in the historical records of Moses, the divine songs of David and the wisdom of Solomon and Isaiah. In like manner, the Christian Revelation had not long been introduced before it was taken out from the exclusive keeping of tradition, and given in charge to writing. It became a religion of records and documents. It took possession of the pen as well as the rostrum and the synagogue, and set its silent pages before the philosopher in his study, as well as lifted its voice to the people in the forum and by the river-side. The Evangelical Histories assumed the ultimate authority, and were spread abroad for the information of man concerning the new faith. The churches received instruction through the epistolary treatises of the apostles as well as by the oral discourses of their teachers.

Thus did Christianity early form an alliance with letters. For several centuries therefore its history was so interwoven with that of literature, that the thread of neither can be followed out independently of the other. During the dark ages, when a total eclipse seemed to threaten the intellect of the world, they clung closely to each other for mutual support. The same causes assailed the integrity of each; it was the union of their strength which at last baffled them. The degeneracy of religion had been caused in no small measure by the prohibition of the Scriptures to the use of the people, and the substitution of tradition and authority in their place. The first step toward a reform was the bringing back to the people these sacred books, — translating them, — expounding, — circulating, — persuading the people to read them and the treatises that were written concerning them. By these means, quite as much as by preaching, did Luther

and his brethren carry forward the Reformation. It was they who read his Bible, quite as much as they who listened to his eloquence, who overturned the ancient order. At that moment, to forward this all important movement, the press started into being, — as if God designed it to be a twin-power with the pulpit for the new triumph of the truth. And so, down to the present day, the honor of sustaining Christianity is shared between the spoken and the printed word. The preacher goes up to the place of holy concourse where the multitude congregates; the Bible and the book go into the domestic dwelling, where families and individuals learn and pray apart. Each does its share of the great work. The hearer of the word and the reader are alike edified; and the boundaries of the church are by each alike enlarged.

So intimate is this connexion of religion with letters, that it has been the chief cause of the extension which has been given to education in modern times. The idea of a universal education is a religious idea. It did not originate at the throne, or in the senate; but at the altar and in the church. It sprung from no desire among the rulers to elevate the people; on the contrary, as a class, they feared it; it was less likely to promote than to thwart the policy of the powerful. It came from those who felt the claims of all men alike as responsible and immortal beings, and who could not rest until every one was put in a way of reading for himself the law by which he is to be judged. Hence the necessity that every man should be educated, — that he might know those Holy Scriptures which make wise unto salvation. Excepting from this view of the subject, it may be doubted whether the idea of a universal education would ever have crossed

the mind. Even as regards the education of the few, who are to sustain the high offices and privileged places at the head of society; even the seminaries for *their* education have been chiefly provided by a religious care. A large proportion of the universities and schools throughout christendom originated in a religious purpose, were governed by religious men, guided to a religious end. And, within the last quarter of a century, — to what in Great Britain are owing the efforts for a universal instruction, but to the religious awakening of that country, which has given birth to new notions of the importance and responsibility of man, and awakened an unknown sympathy in his wants, character, and happiness? Which of the continental nations has accomplished most, but that whose king is distinguished for his attachment to and personal interest in religion? By whose aid is France moving to the same result, but that of the distinguished philosopher who declared that "popular education must be religious, that is, Christian: — religion is the basis of popular education?" And in this country, who are they who are most urgently pressing forward our systems both of the higher and more extended education to their perfection, but they who are interested in it through its connexion with great religious ends, and from a sense of religious responsibility? Indeed, Christianity is at the bottom of the whole movement. There would be no such anxiety that every child should read, were there no Bible by which every child must be saved. The tasks of this life may be very well done without a knowledge of letters; but the key, to the kingdom of Heaven is a key of knowledge, — and they that possess that key, dread their Master's displeasure, if, using it themselves, they shall refuse its use to others.

It would be easy to go on and show, how, in consequence of this great fact, Christianity has been a chief benefactor of literature and science, and an unspeakable blessing to modern civilization. For how much intellect has it summoned into action! How many minds of lofty endowment, that must otherwise have slept unproductive and useless, have been quickened into life by this wide spread opportunity of culture, and made to advance the progress of the race! Let society acknowledge what Christianity has done for it by her charity schools and her countless beneficent individuals, who have brought out from obscurity its gifted sons and trained them for its service. If all the lights which have thus been kindled could at once be extinguished, a visible darkness would ensue; as if, fulfilling the vision of the Apocalypse, a third part of the stars fell from heaven.

The inference to which these thoughts lead, and to which the present occasion calls us, is obvious. If our religion be thus a religion of records and books, — taught and spread by reading as well as by hearing, — then it must be the duty of its friends, to labor for its promotion by the one method as well as the other; and while they associate themselves to support the gospel as it is preached, they should do so none the less to diffuse it as it is printed. To this position I ask your attention. I claim for it the protection of the wise man in the text: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand;"— if you would secure a great object, employ every season, avail yourself of every method; labor for the harvest of everlasting life in season and out of season; morning and evening; by the pulpit and by the press; 'for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or

that;' they are coadjutors, — both efficient, both powerful; and in any given emergency you cannot tell which may prove best; one may succeed when the other fails, one may reach where the other cannot go; — or though both alike be good, nothing is lost by the united effort; your chances of success and your strength to achieve it are doubled.

The position I have here stated is grounded on the obligation lying on Christians to do the utmost in their power for the cause of religion. This obligation I do not now argue. I take it for granted. It is not devotedly acted upon in practical life; — would to God that it was! but it is universally recognised. *Christians are bound to do all which lies in their power for the support and spread of their religion.* The question then is, how? by what methods? The original and authoritative method was by preaching. To that work Christ commissioned his Apostles, and they ordained teachers in every city, and the church was thereby organized, and it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believed. Books at that age were rare and costly; few were able to read and still fewer to buy them. Preaching, "publicly and from house to house," was the great appointed method of making known the faith; — faith came by hearing; and how could they hear without a preacher? And thus the instituted ministry of Christ was the one universal religious educator.

Thus arose the Great Institution of Christendom. To render it an *efficient* institution, was the great care of Christendom. In order to this its whole territory was speedily divided into parishes; every village and hamlet was made an association for the support of religion; every

family and individual was connected with some organized society of Christian worshippers; and through the channels thus cut into every region of the land, the waters of life were conveyed with their fertilizing power, till they irrigated every spot and shed greenness and beauty around every man's dwelling. What an illustrious provision for the moral well being of mankind! Still it exists, venerable and permanent. Multitudes of more pretending and ostentatious institutions have been shaken down in the convulsions of the ages, but this humble ministry survives, and in the vigor of perpetual youth, still pours out the blessing of the Lord upon the human race. Let it live and reign — beneficent — life-giving! Never let New England, — alas, that any signs of the times should make the prayer an anxious one! — never let New England forget that this has been the fountain of her honor, and must be the rock of her trust. If this stand, New England stands; if this fall, New England falls; and if New England fall, who shall provide salt for the corrupting Republic?

But since the day when this great institution was first organized, in the infancy of Christianity and the poverty of letters, a great change has come over the face of society. Books are no longer the costly and infrequent possession they were. Then, the few only could own or peruse them; now, it is only the few that cannot both read and possess. When God reformed his church, he summoned into existence the press; and the question, 'by what method shall we diffuse Christianity?' is no longer to receive one answer, — 'by sending abroad its preachers;' it requires another, — 'by sending abroad its books.' Once, Christians did the utmost for their faith

when they provided for its preaching; now they have done their utmost, only when they have made as thorough and systematic use of the press as they do of the pulpit.

Is this an unreasonable proposition? Here is that work of ineffable grandeur and worth to be done by Christians, — in which the growth and welfare of the human race is bound up, — *the diffusion and influence of the Christian Religion.* Is there any possible means of effecting this, which they are at liberty to omit? If there be any powerful engine in existence adapted to this end, have they a right to refuse it? If Providence has put in their hands any instrument of efficiency, no matter what, whereby the beneficent plans of Christ can be forwarded, have they a choice whether they may despise them? May they rest always satisfied with the one method of the ancients, if another of equal efficiency is at hand to be added to it? And therefore, when this wonderful engine the press, at so significant a crisis in the history of Christianity, offers itself to her service; formed to echo with a thousand repetitions, every voice that is uttered in the pulpit, and capable of sending the truth into a thousand places which the uttered voice never reaches; — it cannot be a question whether they should employ it; they are not at liberty to doubt whether they must do so to the utmost; and how can they employ it to the utmost, excepting by universal concert and an instituted system? It seems to fall short of the occasion to say, that this would be desirable, advisable, useful, perhaps expedient; are we not warranted in choosing a sterner term, and insisting on the *obligation*? Why not divide all Christendom into societies for distributing the printed gospel, as it is already so divided for the support of the preached

gospel? Why not every individual bind himself to do something for the diffusion of books and pamphlets, just as he does for the regular maintenance of public worship? To the pulpit give thine aid, and from the press withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper this or that, or whether both alike shall be good.

If it be said, 'the one is a divine institution, set up from the beginning, and therefore possessing a peculiar obligation' — this may be allowed to be an independent and peculiar reason for sustaining it. But so far as *the duty to unite for the support of the gospel* arises from the *worth* of the gospel, so far the obligation is the same in both cases. Because of its worth, every instrument must be pressed into its service, and the utmost possible done in its behalf, — the utmost with every instrument; if with the pulpit, so also with the press. Is the press a weaker instrument? then the more urgently must it be plied, in order that its utmost may be worth something. Is it a more powerful instrument? then, in God's name, drive it all the harder; for the more it can be made to do, the better for God's glory. If religion triumphs and men are saved, it will not be jealously inquired at the last day by which of the two instruments it was effected.

Which of the two is, in fact, the more powerful or whether both be alike good, is a question impossible now to be discussed; and which happily it is not at all necessary to determine. The opinion which has been sometimes expressed, that the spread of education and the multiplication of books will by and bye cause the pulpit to sink to an inferior place, — that every body will be so much more easily taught and improved by private reading as that none will need the public instruction or exhortation

of God's house ; — this notion is certainly an idle one. Writing, make the best of it, is but a poor substitute for speech. Speech is the natural and perfect mode of communication, bestowed on man by the Creator. Writing is a mechanical and artificial instrument of human contrivance. Who will believe, that the human machine shall ever supersede the divine gift? The one is born with us, is part of ourselves, is interwoven with all the early faculties, functions, associations, affections of our being ; the other is an acquisition of later life, won by pains and toil. To no man does the written book become what the living speaker is. By long habit and retired study, an abstracted scholar here and there may approach such an unnatural state, and a book be to him a man ; — but never can it be so with the majority of men. The form, the eye, the hand, the voice, the action of a living, breathing, thinking, excited fellow-being, — who touches nerve and fibre with his bare soul, as it were, — have and must have, an attraction and authority with men, which paper and printing ink never can attain. Observe how coldly that printed page is read, and when laid down, the man turns to another subject at once ; — but when Buckminster spoke it in a crowded church, every man and woman grew pale and trembled, and it haunted them in their dreams. Yonder volume is accounted dull, and few can be induced to turn over its pages ; — but when Whitefield uttered its contents in the churches and on the hillsides of Old England and New England, the two continents were shaken, and thousands who heard him are still living in old age to have their hearts throb at its memory. And so the pulse of religious life is kept beating, sabbath after sabbath, by discourses eagerly and devoutly attend-

ed, which no one would bear to read if they were printed; nay, multitudes throng to hear, and are saved by hearing the living preacher, who could not be persuaded to open for habitual instruction the most eloquent religious works that earth has ever produced.

But let us not waste words; the pulpit never can lose its place of power, — it answers too essentially to a vital want of society and man. Still, however, it must be considered, that the reading of books has its place of power also, and our argument requires us to go on and show, that, in some respects, it possesses peculiar advantages as a method of diffusing religious influence. Let me hastily glance at some of these.

First, *It is an aid to the pulpit.* If Christ designed that as the master institution, yet it would need its servants in the temple, as the high-priest required the Levites; and what assistant so able as this? When the lesson has been given, and the impression made in the public audience, then this, in subsequent retirement, deepens and strengthens it. What is there, asks some one, that is essential to a man's salvation? Nothing, he replies, but a retired apartment and a Bible. How true is this! And he who comes from that apartment to sit in the congregation, how is he prepared to join in the prayer and be edified by the word! How assuredly would the graces of Christendom flourish, if all that were edified by the preacher on the seventh day, took equal care to edify themselves by moral and religious reading on the other six! Let but our hearers be *daily serious readers*, and they will no more retire from church like the man that beholdeth his natural face in the glass, straightway forgetting what manner of persons they are.

In another way it aids the preacher, namely, by bringing to public worship some who might else have never come within sound of his voice. Unhappily there are some, who, from divers untoward circumstances of education, or situation, or accident, are as much aliens to the house of God as if they were heathen. How are they to be saved? Not by preaching, for they never hear. Their case is hopeless, excepting for some unusual event which shall turn their feet to the holy place. Nothing is more likely to do this than the perusal, under favorable circumstances, of some book or tract, which shall touch the feelings, rouse the sleeping conscience, and excite an anxious curiosity which shall urge them to go for satisfaction and peace to the house of prayer. Often has this very thing taken place. Therefore scatter your tracts; lay your holy books in the path of all thoughtless way-farers; send the truth to seek out and arrest those who would fain flee from it; you thus multiply the hearers of the word, and augment the influence of the pulpit.

Another view. There is a great variety of subjects necessary to be considered by a well informed Christian, on which it is impossible for the stated ministry to enlighten him. He must have acquaintance with the laws of scriptural interpretation, with doctrinal exposition, with church history; but such topics could not be discussed for the edification of a common assembly on the sabbath; they must be learned from books. If we would have believers well instructed in them, we must furnish books for this very end. The stated ministry takes charge of the spiritual life of all, — the least gifted and the most highly endowed; it has one teaching of morality and religious

truth which all alike are to apply, and by which their souls are to be redeemed and sanctified. Happy if, by the grace of God, it be equal to this one momentous charge! But there are those who are seeking, and must have much besides this. They want knowledge. They want to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in them to whomsoever asks: — whether the inquiry be of the inward experience of the heart, or the outward testimony of history, or the primitive philosophy of nature, or the doctrinal controversies of the church; they must therefore be instructed in all these. But in these the pulpit can do almost nothing. To instruct in these is the office of books. They ought to be within reach of every man. The church ought to see that they are provided for him. No man should be left to stumble in the error and darkness of an ignorant, doubting, confused, or skeptical mind, for want of the light which such volumes could throw around him. Why should it be left to chance whether he fall in with them or not? Why not a systematic plan be devised, which should place them before him, as obtrusively as are now placed before him the venerable buildings in which he is invited to worship and find peace?

Another view still. It is imperatively necessary by a religious use of the press, to erect a counteraction to its secular use. Think of its fearful activity in behalf of idle and wasteful tastes! Think of the untold multitude of books that are crowded upon the world with anything but an wholesome influence: — attractive, seductive, lying in every man's way, suited to bewilder, mislead, corrupt, debauch the judgment, heart, life, soul of the unwary and young. The influences thus let loose upon Christendom are tremendous. We gaze on them

with paleness and alarm, and pray for some counteracting agency. Where is it to be found, but in the press itself? That which yielded the poison must furnish the antidote. Pains must be taken to displace the ill and the doubtful by the pure and the safe. Virtue and piety must be ensured their fair chance in the great encounter with false philosophy and unholy pleasure. If the world seizes on the press for its own ends; if all its good and all its evil purposes are carried to their consummation by the help of paper and books; let Religion do the same; let Christianity be as wise in its generation; let zealous care be taken to create a perpetual influence, by faithful instruction and earnest appeals, widely spread and urgently sustained, which shall counteract the ten thousand deleterious influences that are flowing from other sources.

Look then at the particulars which have been mentioned; that the circulation of books tends to increase both the number and the edification of those who attend public worship; that it furnishes instruction which the preacher never could provide; and that there is a necessity to multiply religious and moral books in order to counteract the influence of the secular and injurious; and then say, whether the duty to do something can be well overstated. I see not how Christendom can afford, in the midst of the present amazing intellectual activity, to leave this great matter to take care of itself. Indeed, it is the perception of this, that has given rise to those admirable enterprises, the Bible Society, and the various Tract societies, which operate on no insignificant scale. But they are only the beginning. Something is needed more thorough, universal, systematic; every-where present, always active, — like one of those visible and irresistible energies of the natural world, to which all must yield, and

whose end must be accomplished. Christendom cannot be wholly christianized till this is done.

We, brethren, — for it is to us in our distinctive character as Unitarians that the present meeting belongs, — must have our share in the work. And whatever may be done by others, why should not we, in our own connexion, adopt and execute the plan? Why not, in that little corner of the Lord's garden which he hath allotted us to till and dress, — why not, within our own limits, make the diffusion of religion by books and reading, as stated and as sacred a care as is the institution of the ministry?

Something we have already done. We have always given aid to the general purposes of the Bible Society. We have established and sustained several associations for the publication of tracts. Nay, more, — we have shown our readiness and ability to promote the great end, by the many important works, large and small, on subjects of deep and thoughtful learning, as well as of moral exhortation and spiritual life, which have been composed and published amongst us. Let it not be thought an unreasonable digression, if I detain you in order to exhibit before you the preparation which has in this way been made. It may surprise some, who have not particularly attended to the matter, to learn how extensive and valuable this preparation has been. Let me hastily glance at the catalogue, dividing it, for convenience sake, into three classes; first, of tracts and smaller treatises, — second, of large works on doctrinal and critical subjects, — third, of volumes of sermons.

First, of tracts and lesser treatises; — passing over the sixteen volumes of the "Christian Monitor Society," and the four of the "Publishing Fund," because, valuable as

they are, they are now out of print; — I name the eleven volumes of the American Unitarian Association. Few are probably fully aware of the value of this series of little works, because they are seen singly, like the separate stones of a building; let any one carefully turn them over as they are collected and bound together in the eleven volumes, and he will perceive that they constitute a library of sound treatises on many of the most important questions of theology, and on some of the most vital topics of the moral and spiritual life. I name next, the valuable collection of "Essays and Tracts," published in Baltimore in six volumes, and made up of standard writings of the elder and other eminent authors. And if time permitted, I might bring forward a long list of separate occasional pieces by various writers, worthy of perpetual preservation, which have been drawn forth by the wants of the last twenty years, and which deserve to live longer than the occasion which gave them birth.

Of the second class, — larger works on critical and doctrinal theology, — we have, first, the several publications of the late Dr. Worcester; the "Bible News," one of the most felicitous and effective at its first appearing, and possessing a permanent value; the "Treatise on the Atonement," which merits to be in the hands of every man who cares to have a heart thoroughly at rest on that great point; and his "Last Thoughts," the legacy, as it were, of the good man's ripe and benignant wisdom. Let me name next, "Letters to Universalists," by Bernard Whitman, — the only volume published amongst us on that controversy, and marked with all the care, strength and clearness of his vigorous and peculiar mind. Let me come to the names of living authors, and specify

the volumes of "Doctrinal Discourses" by our venerable brother at Worcester, and by our younger brother of Baltimore; the two doctrinal works * by the former minister of the latter city, and the "Letters on the Logos," by one of our brethren in Salem; not to omit the "Defence of Christianity," by a young scholar who learned unhappily to prefer honor in another direction. Let me name the learned "Natural History of the Bible," a work thought worthy to be printed and reprinted in more than one form by the British press. More recently, the "Remarks on the Four Gospels," a work, whatever may be thought of its peculiar speculations, full of faith and beauty. Then follow the "Statement of Reasons," and the "Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels," standard works in defence of the books and doctrines of Christianity; the "Academical Lectures on the Old Testament," which successfully open the way for the common reader to a perusal of the Jewish scriptures with intelligent faith and a clear understanding; and finally, the translations of Job, the Psalms, and the Prophets, a work to be recommended to all who would read these books with satisfaction, as comprising the advantages without the tediousness of a commentary, and the beauty without the liberties of a poetical version. What a rich list of books does this second class contain! The four last named alone, are enough to render illustrious a generation.

The third class consists of volumes of sermons; and I question whether any sect in Christendom has ever produced so many volumes of a superior character within the same space of time, as have been published among us

* "Letters on the Episcopal Church," and "Inquiry into the Moral Tendency of Trinitarianism."

within the last twenty-five years. It was just at that date, that appeared the first volume of the illustrious Buckminster, which, having passed through three editions, is now alas out of print.* This was followed by those of the venerable Freeman, the accomplished Thacher, the beloved Abbott, and the evangelical Parker; holy and precious are their memories! Afterward came those of men still living — long may they be spared! the two volumes of the elder minister of the church in Federal Street, that of the present minister at New York, and that of my colleague in the Theological Faculty; each signally characteristic, and each unsurpassed in its own class, as it seems to me, and I know not why I should hesitate to say it, by any volumes of sermons in the English tongue. Others I might add. That is a rich church whose pulpit in so brief a period can send out nine such volumes to testify to the fidelity of its ministry.

Thus, then, without pretending to exhaust the catalogue, I have named more than sixty volumes of doctrinal, practical and critical divinity, — all of high character, and some of extraordinary merit, — published among ourselves within a quarter of a century. They may suitably be styled the American Unitarian Library. He upon whose shelves they stand, is amply provided; and the community in which they should be familiarly known, would be well instructed in the things that pertain to faith and godliness.

Here then, it cannot be denied, is an ample foundation on which to build the scheme of universal distribution. Would we sow the land thick with religion and salvation?

* I am happy in being able to say that an edition of the complete works of Buckminster is in contemplation.

The seed is ripe and ready; let us not withhold our hand, but scatter it abroad freely. It cannot fail to prosper. Let us do it for the sake of our common Christianity, which demands the succor of all her children, of whatever diversity of opinion, to carry her through the perils with which a worldly and speculative generation has encompassed her, and to ensure her rightful supremacy amidst the contending interests of an excited and struggling community. Let us do it for the sake of those peculiar views of our religion, which are venerable and dear to us, but despised and rejected by others, and which demand to be manfully asserted and solemnly promulgated in order that they may receive the honor which is their due. Let us do it for the sake of our fellow-men. The mind of the country is awake, inquiry is active; our books and pamphlets are eagerly read by many to whom they are new, and to whom they unfold a new page of the religious life. They reveal to some the unsuspected fact, that while imagining themselves Calvinists, as they had been educated to be, their minds have been imperceptibly breathed upon by another spirit, and have drifted away to a more liberal faith; while others, — we thank God, — have been directly converted by them to the Unitarian interpretation.

Yet with all this encouragement to active exertion, how slight the efforts that have been made! how few of us make it any part of our concern to circulate, or to promote the circulation of our theological publications, to carry them with us, to lend them, to recommend them, to have them lying on our tables, to scatter them when we travel, to send them to a distance. A few do thus, and, considering how few, it is remarkable how great are

the effects. If all did likewise, what might not be hoped! Let us ask, whether we ought not. Let us reflect whether there be not a special obligation on us, because of our peculiar relation to the Christian community — cut off as we are, and denounced, and the truth we love every where decried! Being defamed, should we not entreat? Being misrepresented, should we not appeal? When every method is used to prevent our gaining a fair hearing for the word which God has entrusted to us, should we not use every method to win, or even extort, a fair hearing? When we are so placed, that, if you lend a friend a volume of Priestley's Sermons, an orthodox neighbour thinks it right furtively to remove and lose it; if you lay tracts on the table of a steam-boat, he cautiously drops them into the water; if you lend the most innocent work of devotion by a Unitarian author, he feels it a duty to make it suspected as unsafe and poisonous; — when such things are, is it not a duty to press more and more urgently the means of light and truth; to diffuse yet more and more actively those works which shall disabuse men of their false impressions, and substitute knowledge for error? So let it be. Send out more light! the dark world waits for it. Make the day dawn and the day-star arise! In the morning sow your seed, in the evening withhold not; the hungry world waits for the harvest. Send forth your messengers to the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in. Multiply your witnesses. Let them fly upon every wind; in such numbers that they cannot be annihilated; and for each that is destroyed, let two take its place. Let it be seen that we are engaged in earnest in our share of the work of enlightening society by a pure doctrine; that we are bound to it as

Christians, as patriots, as reformers; that we mean to do it, come what may; that the truth which God has entrusted to us, shall not die in our hands; its blood shall not stain our garments; if the Reformation does not go on, and Christendom still holds back deceived and darkened, the blame shall be on other heads than ours.

In this spirit, I trust, the society whose anniversary we celebrate has undertaken its work, and calls on us to help it. For the diffusion of the Christian religion in its doctrine, its spirit, its morals, — it labors by the circulation of books and pamphlets; beginning with the first of all books, the Bible, and embracing a multitude of works, larger and smaller, which may teach the truth and lead to holiness. Let us bid it God speed, and help it. It is one of the earliest, perhaps the first, of those associations formed by young men, whose multiplication has breathed so much young life into the various departments of society. It has effected much. It distributed within the last year more than eleven thousand, and during the preceding year more than fourteen thousand copies of various works. It would gladly do more. Let us bid it God speed, and help it. Let us offer it, in our contribution to night, a substantial token of sympathy and good-will. If there be any justice in the views which I have presented, this is one of the institutions which we need and which we are bound to patronize. This is one of the broad-cast sowers of spiritual seed; if we would see the great and universal harvest cover that field which is the world, this and its kindred fellow-workers must be cheered with a steady support, equal to that, or second only to that, which is bestowed on the sacred institution of public worship.

To the list of Unitarian books given by the writer of this Tract on pages 18, 19, and 20, the Executive Committee add the following: —

	Vols.
Abbot's (A.) Sermons,	1
Abbot's (J. L.) Sermons, Selections from,	1
Adams' (Hannah) Letters on the Gospels,	1
Adams, (Hannah) Memoirs of,	1
Bradford's Life of Mayhew,	1
Brazer's Essay on Divine Influence,	1
Brooks' Prayers,	1
Brooks' Daily Monitor,	1
Bulfinch's Contemplations of the Savior,	1
Burton's Cheering Views,	1
Cole's Meditations for the Sick,	1
Colman's Sermons,	2
Dabney's Prayers,	1
Dabney's Annotations on the New Testament,	1
Farr's Plain Letters on Important Subjects,	1
Farr's Counsels and Consolations,	1
Farr's Sermons,	1
Farr's Prayers,	1
Forster's Sermons,	1
Fox's Ministry of Jesus Christ,	2
Gannett's Religious Consolations,	1
Goodwin's Sermons,	1
Greenwood's Lives of the Apostles,	1
Muzzey's Young Man's Friend,	1
Muzzey's Sunday School Guide,	1
Nichols' Natural Theology,	1
Parkman's Offering of Sympathy,	1
Pitkin's Sermons,	1
Scenes, &c., illustrating Christian Truth, edited by H. Ware, Jr.	6
Sewall's Prayers,	1
Tuckerman's Results of the Ministry at Large,	1
Ware's (H. Sen.) Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists,	1
Ware's (H. Jr.) Discourses on the Offices of Christ,	1
Ware's Recollections of Jotham Anderson,	1
Ware's Formation of the Christian Character,	1
Ware's Sunday School Library,	4
Whitman's (B.) Village Sermons,	1
Whitman's (J.) Memoirs of B. Whitman,	1
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Also the following Periodical Publications: —

Christian Disciple,	6
Christian Examiner,	24
Unitarian Miscellany,	6
Unitarian Advocate,	6
Unitarian,	1
Teacher's Manual,	2
Scriptural Interpreter,	6
Sunday School Teacher,	4
Western Messenger,	5

1st Series No. 133.

THE

FUTURE LIFE.

By WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D.D.

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THE

FUTURE LIFE.

HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, AND SET HIM AT HIS OWN RIGHT HAND IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES.

THERE is one method in which Christ's resurrection gives aid to our faith in another life, which is not often dwelt on, and which seems to me worthy of attention. Our chief doubts and difficulties in regard to that state spring chiefly from the senses and the imagination, and not from the reason. The eye, fixed on the lifeless body, on the wan features and the motionless limbs, — and the imagination, following the frame into the dark tomb, and representing to itself the stages of decay and ruin, are apt to fill and oppress the mind with discouraging and appalling thoughts. The senses can detect in the pale corse not a trace of the activity of that spirit which lately moved it. Death seems to have achieved an entire victory; and when reason and revelation speak of continued and a higher life, the senses and imagination, pointing to the disfigured and mouldering body, obscure by their sad forebodings the light which reason and revelation strive to kindle in the bereaved soul.

Now the resurrection of Christ meets, if I may so say, the senses and imagination on their own ground, contends with them with their own weapons. It shows us the very frame, on which death, in its most humiliating form, had set its seal, and which had been committed in utter hopelessness to the tomb, rising, breathing, moving with new life, and rising not to return again to the earth, but, after a short sojourn, to ascend from the earth to a purer region, and thus to attest man's destination to a higher life. These facts, submitted to the very senses, and almost necessarily kindling the imagination to explore the unseen world, seem to me particularly suited to overcome the main difficulties in the way of Christian faith. Reason is not left to struggle alone with the horrors of the tomb. The assurance that Jesus Christ, who lived on the earth, who died on the cross, and was committed a mutilated, bleeding frame to the receptacle of the dead, rose uninjured, and then exchanged an earthly for a heavenly life, puts to flight the sad auguries, which rise like spectres from the grave, and helps us to conceive, as in our present weakness we could not otherwise conceive, of man's appointed triumph over death.

Such is one of the aids given by the resurrection to faith in immortality. Still this faith is lamentably weak in the multitude of men. To multitudes Heaven is almost a world of fancy. It wants substance. The idea of a world, in which beings exist without these gross bodies, exist as pure spirits, or clothed with refined and spiritual frames, strikes them as a fiction. What cannot be seen or touched, appears unreal. This is mournful, but not wonderful; for how can men, who immerse themselves in the body and its interests, and cultivate no ac-

quaintance with their own souls and spiritual powers, comprehend a higher, spiritual life? There are multitudes who pronounce a man a visionary, who speaks distinctly and joyfully of his future being, and of the triumph of the mind over bodily decay.

This scepticism as to things spiritual and celestial, is as irrational and unphilosophical as it is degrading. We have more evidence that we have souls or spirits, than that we have bodies. We are surer, that we think and feel, and will, than that we have solid and extended limbs and organs. Philosophers have said much to disprove the existence of matter and motion, but they have not tried to disprove the existence of thought; for it is by thought that they attempt to set aside the reality of material nature.

Farther, how irrational is it, to imagine, that there are no worlds but this, and no higher modes of existence than our own. Who that sends his eye through this immense creation, can doubt that there are orders of beings superior to ourselves, or can see any thing unreasonable in the doctrine, that there are states in which mind exists less circumscribed and clogged by matter than on earth, in other words, that there is a spiritual world. It is childish to make this infant life of ours the model of existence in all other worlds. The philosopher, especially, who sees a vast chain of beings and an infinite variety of life on this single globe, which is but a point in creation, should be ashamed of that narrowness of mind, which can anticipate nothing nobler in the universe of God than his present mode of being.

How, now, shall the doctrine of a future, higher life, the doctrine both of reason and revelation, be brought to

bear more powerfully on the mind, to become more real, and effectual? Various methods might be given. I shall confine myself to one. This method is, to seek some clearer, more definite conception of the future state. That world seems less real, for want of some distinctness in its features. We should all believe it more firmly if we conceived of it more vividly. It seems unsubstantial, from its vagueness and dimness. I think it right, then, to use the aids of Scripture and Reason in forming to ourselves something like a sketch of the life to come. The scriptures, indeed, give not many materials for such a delineation, but the few they furnish are invaluable, especially when we add to these the lights thrown over futurity by the knowledge of our own spiritual nature Every new law of the mind, which we discover, helps us to comprehend its destiny; for its future life must correspond to its great laws and essential powers.

These aids we should employ to give distinctness to the spiritual state; and it is particularly useful so to do, when excellent beings, whom we have known and loved, pass from earth into that world. Nature prompts us to follow them to their new abode, to inquire into their new life, to represent to ourselves their new happiness; and perhaps the spiritual world never becomes so near and real to us, as when we follow into it dear friends, and sympathise with them in the improvements and enjoyments of that blessed life. Do not say that there is danger here of substituting imagination for Truth. There is no danger if we confine ourselves to the spiritual views of Heaven, given us in the New Testament, and interpret these by the principles and powers of our own souls. To me the subject is too dear and sacred to allow me to in-

dulge myself in dreams. I want reality; I want truth; and this I find in God's word and in the human soul.

When our virtuous friends leave the world, we know not the place where they go. We can turn our eyes to no spot in the universe, and say they are there. Nor is our ignorance here of any moment. It is unimportant what region of space contains them. Whilst we know not to what place they go, we know what is infinitely more interesting, to what Beings they go. We know not where Heaven is, but we know Whom it contains, and this knowledge opens us an infinite field for contemplation and delight.

1. Our virtuous friends, at death, go to Jesus Christ This is taught by the apostle. "God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to Heaven." The New Testament always speaks of Jesus as existing now in the spiritual world, and Paul tells us that it is the happiness of the holy, when absent from the body, to be present with the Lord. Here is one great fact in regard to futurity. The good, on leaving us here, meet their Saviour: and this view alone assures us of their unutterable happiness. In this world, they had cherished acquaintance with Jesus through the records of the evangelists. They had followed him through his eventful life with veneration and love, had treasured in their memories his words, works, and life-giving promises, and, by receiving his spirit, had learnt something of the virtues and happiness of a higher world. Now they meet him, they see him. He is no longer a faint object to their mind, obscured by distance and by the mists of sense and the world. He is present to them, and more intimately present, than we are to each other. Of this we are sure; for whilst the

precise mode of our future existence is unknown, we do know, that spiritual beings in that higher state must approach and commune with each other more and more intimately in proportion to their progress. Those who are newly born into Heaven meet Jesus, and meet from him the kindest welcome. The happiness of the Saviour, in receiving to a higher life a human being who has been redeemed, purified, inspired with immortal goodness by his influence, we can but imperfectly comprehend. You can conceive what would be your feelings, on welcoming to shore your best friend, who had been tossed on a perilous sea; but the raptures of earthly reunion are faint compared with the happiness of Jesus, in receiving the spirit for which he died, and which under his guidance has passed with an improving virtue through a world of sore temptation. We on earth meet after our long separations to suffer as well as enjoy, and soon to part again. Jesus meets those who ascend from earth to Heaven with the consciousness, that their trial is past, their race is run, that death is conquered. With his far-reaching prophetic eye he sees them entering a career of joy and glory never to end. And his benevolent welcome is expressed with a power, which belongs only to the utterance of Heaven, and which communicates to them an immediate, confiding, overflowing joy. You know that on earth we sometimes meet human beings, whose countenances, at the first view, scatter all distrust, and win from us something like the reliance of a long tried friendship. One smile is enough to let us into their hearts, to reveal to us a goodness on which we may repose. That smile with which Jesus will meet the new born inhabitant of Heaven, that joyful greeting, that beaming of love from

him who bled for us, that tone of welcome, — all these I can faintly conceive, but no language can utter them. The joys of centuries will be crowded into that meeting. This is not fiction. It is truth founded on the essential laws of the mind.

Our friends, when they enter Heaven, meet Jesus Christ, and their intercourse with him will be of the most affectionate and ennobling character. There will be nothing of distance in it. Jesus is indeed sometimes spoken of as reigning in the future world, and sometimes imagination places him on a real and elevated throne. Strange that such conceptions can enter the minds of Christians. Jesus will indeed reign in Heaven, and so he reigned on earth. He reigned in the fishing-boat, from which he taught; in the humble dwelling, where he gathered round him listening and confiding disciples. His reign is not the vulgar dominion of this world. It is the empire of a great, godlike, disinterested being, over minds capable of comprehending and loving him. In Heaven, nothing like what we call government on earth can exist, for government here is founded in human weakness and guilt. The voice of command is never heard among the spirits of the just. Even on earth, the most perfect government is that of a family, where parents employ no tone but that of affectionate counsel, where filial affection reads its duty in the mild look, and finds its law and motive in its own pure impulse. Christ will not be raised on a throne above his followers. On earth he sat at the same table with the publican and sinner. Will he recede from the excellent whom he has fitted for celestial mansions? How minds will communicate with one another in that world, we know not; but we know

that our closest embraces are but types of the spiritual nearness which will then be enjoyed; and to this intimacy with Jesus the newborn inhabitant of Heaven is admitted.

But we have not yet exhausted this source of future happiness. The excellent go from earth not only to receive a joyful welcome and assurance of eternal love from the Lord. There is a still higher view. They are brought by this new intercourse to a new comprehension of his mind, and to a new reception of his spirit. It is indeed a happiness to know that we are objects of interest and love to an illustrious being; but it is a greater happiness, to know deeply the sublime and beautiful character of this being, to sympathise with him, to enter into his vast thoughts and pure designs, and to become associated with him in the great ends for which he lives. Even here in our infant and dim state of being, we learn enough of Jesus, of his divine philanthropy triumphant over injuries and agonies, to thrill us with affectionate admiration. But those in Heaven look into that vast, godlike soul, as we have never done. They approach it, as we cannot approach the soul of the most confiding friend: and this nearness to the mind of Jesus awakens in themselves a power of love and virtue, which they little suspected during their earthly being. I trust I speak to those, who, if they have ever been brought into connexion with a noble human being, have felt, as it were, a new spirit, and almost new capacities of thought and life, expanded within them. We all know, how a man of mighty genius and of heroic feeling, can impart himself to other minds, and raise them for a time to something like his own energy; and in this we have a

faint delineation of the power to be exerted on the minds of those who approach Jesus after death. As nature at this season springs to a new life under the beams of the sun, so will the human soul be warmed and expanded under the influence of Jesus Christ. It will then become truly conscious of the immortal power treasured up in itself. His greatness will not overwhelm it, but will awaken a corresponding grandeur.

Nor is this topic yet exhausted. The good, on approaching Jesus, will not only sympathise with his spirit, but will become joint workers, active, efficient ministers, in accomplishing his great work of spreading virtue and happiness. We must never think of Heaven as a state of inactive contemplation, or of unproductive feeling. Even here on earth, the influence of Christ's character is seen awakening an active, self-sacrificing goodness. It sends the true disciples to the abodes of the suffering. It binds them by new ties to their race. It gives them a new consciousness of being created for a ministry of beneficence; and can they, when they approach more nearly this divine Philanthropist, and learn, by a new alliance with him, the fullness of his love, can they fail to consecrate themselves to his work and to kindred labors with an energy of will unknown on earth? In truth, our sympathy with Christ could not be perfect, did we not act with him. Nothing so unites beings as co-operation in the same glorious cause, and to this union with Christ the excellent above are received.

There is another very interesting view of the future state, which seems to me to be a necessary consequence of the connexion to be formed there with Jesus Christ. Those who go there from among us, must retain the deep-

est interest in this world. Their ties to those they have left are not dissolved, but only refined. On this point, indeed, I want not the evidence of revelation; I want no other evidence than the essential principles and laws of the soul. If the future state is to be an improvement on the present, if intellect is to be invigorated and love expanded there, then memory, the fundamental power of the intellect, must act with new energy on the past, and all the benevolent affections, which have been cherished here, must be quickened into a higher life. To suppose the present state blotted out hereafter from the mind, would be to destroy its use, would cut off all connexion between the two worlds, and would subvert responsibility; for how can retribution be awarded for a forgotten existence? No; we must carry the present with us, whether we enter the world of happiness or wo. The good will indeed form new, holier, stronger ties above; but under the expanding influence of that better world, the human heart will be capacious enough to retain the old whilst it receives the new, to remember its birth-place with tenderness whilst enjoying a maturer and happier being. Did I think of those who are gone, as dying to those they left, I should honor and love them less. The man, who forgets his home when he quits it, seems to want the best sensibilities of our nature; and if the good were to forget their brethren on earth in their new abode, were to cease to intercede for them in their nearer approach to their common Father, could we think of them as improved by the change?

All this I am compelled to infer from the nature of the human mind. But when I add to this, that the new-born heirs of heaven go to Jesus Christ, the great lover of the

human family, who dwelt here, suffered here, who moistened our earth with his tears and blood, who has gone not to break off but to continue and perfect his beneficent labors for mankind, whose mind never for a moment turns from our race, whose interest in the progress of his truth and the salvation of the tempted soul has been growing more and more intense ever since he left our world, and who has thus bound up our race with his very being,—when I think of all this, I am sure that they cannot forget our world. Could we hear them, I believe they would tell us that they never truly loved the race before; never before knew, what it is to sympathise with human sorrow, to rejoice in human virtue, to mourn for human guilt. A new fountain of love to man is opened within them. They now see what before dimly gleamed on them, the capacities, the mysteries of a human soul. The significance of that word Immortality is now apprehended, and every being destined to it rises into unutterable importance. They love human nature as never before, and human friends are prized as above all price.

Perhaps it may be asked whether those born into Heaven, not only remember with interest, but have a present, immediate knowledge of those whom they left on earth? On this point neither Scripture, nor the principles of human nature, give us light, and we are of course left to uncertainty. I will only say, that I know nothing to prevent such knowledge. We are indeed accustomed to think of Heaven as distant; but of this we have no proof. Heaven is the union, the society of spiritual, higher beings. May not these fill the universe, so as to make Heaven every where? are such beings probably

circumscribed, as we are, by material limits? Milton has said :—

> "Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth
> Both when we wake and when we sleep."

It is possible that the distance of Heaven lies wholly in the veil of flesh, which we now want power to penetrate. A new sense, a new eye, might show the spiritual world compassing us on every side.

But suppose Heaven to be remote. Still we on earth may be visible to its inhabitants; still in an important sense they may be present; for what do we mean by presence? Am I not present to those of you who are beyond the reach of my arm, but whom I distinctly see? And is it at all inconsistent with our knowledge of nature, to suppose that those in Heaven, whatever be their abode, may have spiritual senses, organs, by which they may discern the remote, as clearly as we do the near? This little ball of sight can see the planets at the distance of millions of miles, and by the aids of science, can distinguish the inequalities of their surfaces. And it is easy for us to conceive of an organ of vision so sensitive and piercing, that from our earth the inhabitants of those far-rolling worlds might be discerned. Why then may not they who have entered a higher state, and are clothed with spiritual frames, survey our earth as distinctly as when it was their abode?

This may be the truth; but if we receive it as such, let us not abuse it. It is liable to abuse. Let us not think of the departed, as looking on us with earthly, partial affections. They love us more than ever, but with a refined and spiritual love. They have now but one wish

for us, which is, that we may fit ourselves to join them in their mansions of benevolence and piety. Their spiritual vision penetrates to our souls. Could we hear their voice, it would not be an utterance of personal attachment, so much as a quickening call to greater effort, to more resolute self-denial, to a wider charity, to a meeker endurance, a more filial obedience of the will of God. Nor must we think of them as appropriated to ourselves. They are breathing now an atmosphere of divine benevolence. They are charged with a higher mission than when they trod the earth. And this thought of the enlargement of their love, should enlarge ours, and carry us beyond selfish regards to a benevolence akin to that with which they are inspired.

It is objected, I know, to the view I have given of the connexion of the inhabitants of Heaven with this world, that it is inconsistent with their happiness. It is said that if they retain their knowledge of this state, they must suffer from the recollection or sight of our sins and woes; that to enjoy Heaven, they must wean themselves from the earth. This objection is worse than superficial. It is a reproach to Heaven and the good. It supposes, that the happiness of that world is founded in ignorance, that it is the happiness of the blind man, who, were he to open his eye on what exists around him, would be filled with horror. It makes Heaven an Elysium, whose inhabitants perpetuate their joy by shutting themselves up in narrow bounds, and hiding themselves from the pains of their fellow creatures. But the good, from their very nature, cannot thus be confined. Heaven would be a prison, did it cut them off from sympathy with the suffering. Their benevolence is too pure, too divine, to shrink from the

sight of evil. Let me add, that the objection before us casts reproach on God. It supposes that there are regions of his universe, which must be kept out of sight, which, if seen, would blight the happiness of the virtuous. But this cannot be true. There are no such regions, no secret places of wo which these pure spirits must not penetrate. There is impiety in the thought. In such a universe there could be no Heaven.

Do you tell me that according to these views, suffering must exist in that blessed state? I reply, I do and must regard heaven as a world of sympathy. Nothing, I believe, has greater power to attract the regards of its benevolent inhabitants, than the misery into which any of their fellow creatures may have fallen. The suffering which belongs to a virtuous sympathy, I cannot then separate from Heaven. But that sympathy, though it has sorrow, is far from being misery. Even in this world, a disinterested compassion, when joined with power to minister to suffering, and with wisdom to comprehend its gracious purposes, is a spirit of peace, and often issues in the purest delight, Unalloyed as it will be in another world by our present infirmities, and enlightened by comprehensive views of God's perfect government, it will give a charm and loveliness to the sublimer virtues of the blessed, and, like all other forms of excellence, will at length enhance their felicity.

II. You see how much of Heaven is taught us in the single truth, that they who enter it, meet and are united to Jesus Christ. There are other interesting views at which I can only glance. The departed go not to Jesus only. They go to the great and blessed society which is gathered round him, to the redeemed from all regions of

earth, "to the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, to the church of the first born, to the spirits of the just made perfect." Into what a glorious community do they enter! And how they are received you can easily understand. We are told, there is joy in heaven over the sinner who repenteth; and will not his ascension to the abode of perfect virtue communicate more fervent happiness? Our friends who leave us for that world, do not find themselves cast among strangers. No desolate feeling springs up of having exchanged their home for a foreign country. The tenderest accents of human friendship never approached in affectionateness the voice of congratulation, which bids them welcome to their new and everlasting abode. In that world, where minds have surer means of revealing themselves than here, the newly arrived immediately see and feel themselves encompassed with virtue and goodness; and through this insight into the congenial spirits which surround them, intimacies stronger than years can cement on earth may be created in a moment.

It seems to me accordant with all the principles of human nature, to suppose that the departed meet peculiar congratulation from friends who had gone before them to that better world; and especially from all who had in any way given aids to their virtue; from parents who had instilled into them the first lessons of love to God and man; from associates, whose examples had won them to goodness, whose faithful counsels deterred them from sin. The ties created by such benefits must be eternal. The grateful soul must bind itself with peculiar affection to such as guided it to immortality.

In regard to the happiness of the intercourse of the

future state, all of you, I trust, can form some apprehensions of it. If we have ever known the enjoyments of friendship, of entire confidence, of co-operation in honorable and successful labors with those we love, we can comprehend something of the felicity of a world, where souls, refined from selfishness, open as the day, thirsting for new truth and virtue, endued with new power of enjoying the beauty and grandeur of the universe, allied in the noblest works of benevolence, and continually discovering new mysteries of the Creator's power and goodness, communicate themselves to one another with the freedom of perfect love. The closest attachments of this life are cold, distant, stranger-like, compared with theirs. How they communicate themselves, by what language or organs, we know not. But this we know, that in the progress of the mind, its power of imparting itself must improve. The eloquence, the thrilling, inspiring tones, in which the good and noble sometimes speak to us on earth, may help us to conceive the expressiveness, harmony, energy of the language in which superior beings reveal themselves above. Of what they converse we can better judge. They, who enter that world, meet beings, whose recollections extend through ages, who have met together perhaps from various worlds, who have been educated amidst infinite varieties of condition, each of whom has passed through his own discipline and reached his own peculiar form of perfection, and each of whom is a peculiar testimony to the providence of the Universal Father. What treasures of memory, observation, experience, imagery, illustration, must enrich the intercourse of Heaven! One angel's history may be a volume of more various truth, than all the records of our race. — After all,

how little can our present experience help us to understand the intercourse of Heaven, a communion, marred by no passion, chilled by no reserve, depressed by no consciousness of sin, trustful as childhood, and overflowing with innocent joy, a communion, in which the noblest feelings spring fresh from the heart, in which pure beings give familiar utterance to their divinest inspirations, to the Wonder which perpetually springs up amidst this ever unfolding and ever mysterious universe, to the raptures of adoration and pious gratitude, and to the swellings of a sympathy which cannot be confined.

But it would be wrong to imagine that the inhabitants of Heaven only converse. They who reach that world, enter on a state of action, life, effort. We are apt to think of the future world as so happy, that none need the aid of others, that effort ceases, that the good have nothing to do, but to enjoy. The truth is, that all action on earth, even the intensest, is but the sport of childhood, compared with the energy and activity of that higher life. It must be so. For what principles are so active as intellect, benevolence, the love of truth, the thirst for perfection, sympathy with the suffering, and devotion to God's purposes; and these are the ever expanding principles of the future life. It is true, the labors which are now laid on us for food, raiment, outward interests, cease at the grave. But far deeper wants than those of the body are developed in Heaven. There it is, that the spirit first becomes truly conscious of its capacities; that truth opens before us in its infinity; that the universe is seen to be a boundless sphere for discovery, for science, for the sense of beauty, for beneficence, and for adoration. There new objects to live for, which reduce to nothing-

ness present interests, are constantly unfolded. We must not think of Heaven as a stationary community. I think of it as a world of stupendous plans and efforts for its own improvement. I think of it, as a society passing through successive stages of development, virtue, knowledge, power, by the energy of its own members. Celestial genius is always active to explore the great laws of the creation and the everlasting principles of the mind, to disclose the beautiful in the universe, and to discover the means by which every soul may be carried forward. In that world, as in this, there are diversities of intellect, and the highest minds find their happiness and progress in elevating the less improved. There the work of education, which began here, goes on without end; and a diviner philosophy than is taught on earth, reveals the spirit to itself, and awakens it to earnest, joyful effort for its own perfection.

And not only will they, who are born into Heaven enter a society full of life and action for its own development. Heaven has connexion with other worlds. Its inhabitants are God's messengers through the creation. They have great trusts. In the progress of their endless being, they may have the care of other worlds. But I pause, lest to those unused to such speculations, I seem to exceed the bounds of calm anticipation. What I have spoken seems to me to rest on God's word, and the laws of the mind, and these laws are everlasting.

On one more topic I meant to enlarge, but I must forbear. They who are born into Heaven go, not only to Jesus, and an innumerable company of pure beings. They go to God. They see Him with a new light in all

his works. Still more, they see Him, as the Scriptures teach, face to face, that is, by Immediate Communion. These new relations of the ascended spirit, to the Universal Father, how near! how tender! how strong! how exalting! But this is too great a subject, for the time which remains. And yet it is the chief element of the felicity of Heaven.

The views now given of the future state should make it an object of deep interest, earnest hope, constant pursuit. Heaven is, in truth, a glorious reality. Its attraction should be felt perpetually. It should overcome the force with which this world draws us to itself. Were there a country on earth, uniting all that is beautiful in nature, all that is great in virtue, genius, and the liberal arts, and numbering among its citizens, the most illustrious patriots, poets, philosophers, philanthropists of our age, how eagerly should we cross the ocean to visit it! And how immeasurably greater is the attraction of Heaven! There, live the elder brethren of the creation, the sons of the morning, who sang for joy at the creation of our race; there, the great and good of all ages and climes; the friends, benefactors, deliverers, ornaments of their race; the patriarch, prophet, apostle, and martyr; the true heroes of public and still more of private life; the father, mother, wife, husband, child, who, unrecorded by man, have walked before God in the beauty of love and self-sacrificing virtue. There, are all who have built up in our hearts the power of goodness and truth, the writers, from whose pages we have received the inspiration of pure and lofty sentiments, the friends, whose countenances have shed light through our dwellings, and peace and

strength through our hearts. There they are gathered together, safe from every storm, triumphant over evil;—and they say to us, Come and join us in our everlasting blessedness; Come and bear part in our song of praise; Share our adoration, friendship, progress, and works of love. They say to us, Cherish now in your earthly life that spirit and virtue of Christ, which is the beginning and dawn of Heaven, and we shall soon welcome you, with more than human friendship, to our own immortality. Shall that voice speak to us in vain? Shall our worldliness and unforsaken sins, separate us, by a gulf which cannot be passed, from the society of Heaven?

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REPENTANCE

THE

GROUND OF FORGIVENESS.

By REV. JOSEPH HUTTON, L.L.D.
OF LONDON.

PRINTED FOR THE

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I. R. BUTTS .....PRINTER.....2 SCHOOL STREET.

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Our knowledge of him whom God hath formed in his own image, is the primary source of our knowledge of God himself. The brother whom we have seen suggests to us the first imperfect ideas of those attributes which, in their perfection, we afterwards ascribe to the Father whom we have not seen. There is no single quality that we believe to exist in the Creator, (and this consideration alone may serve to shew how wholly inadequate our conception of him must be,) some faint image of which we have not first observed in the creature. *We* have not heard, nor can *we* conceive of any characteristics of the Divine Mind that do not, in some degree, appertain to human beings. When, for instance, we ascribe power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, or any other attribute to God, it is not till we have derived our first notion of its existence and its value from the contemplation of God's image, man. Our argument for the very being of our

great Creator, drawn from the manifold proofs of superhuman skill and contrivance which we discover in his works, would never have suggested itself, and would have had no validity, if man had not been a contriver.

Is it not strange, when this fact is considered, that any serious religionist should think himself justified in depreciating, as some do, the nature that God has given us, and representing as wholly corrupt and depraved the being whose character and conduct, how imperfect soever, must in every age and nation supply the germ, to say the very least, of our conceptions of divine excellence. If man were indeed altogether bad, it may well be questioned whether he could even form the idea of a God who is altogether good. If the thoughts and feelings of his heart were in a strictly literal sense "*only* evil continually," reason and revelation might speak to him in vain of the moral perfections of their Author, for their language in that case he could not comprehend. Even to those whom God "suffered in times past to walk in their own ways, he left not himself," says St. Paul, "without a witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But where, I ask, would have been the witness even of these mercies of providence, to minds destitute of all good feeling, alike devoid of gratitude and of benevolence? To the heart which has no love within it works of love must speak in vain. Nature doubtless has a voice, but it is a voice which the mere bodily ear cannot hear. The goodness of God in his works can be fully discerned by the benevolent heart alone. Such a one is indeed filled with "gladness," as well as "food," by the falling showers and the fruitful seasons. Rejoicing

with them that rejoice, he who is in sympathy with his fellow creatures looks upward with grateful emotion to the fountain of its joy. To him "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." But this silent eloquence of nature — this speech and language of the soul, cold, stony-hearted selfishness could never comprehend. Through his children the Universal Father must be first known. We must rise from the love of the creature to that of the Creator; and he whose soul has not yet compassed the lower strain of the angelic song, "Peace on earth and good will to man," will vainly hope to reach that higher one, "Glory to God in the highest." "He who loveth not his brother whom he *hath* seen, how *can* he love God whom he hath *not* seen." We have never seen the Great Original; all our ideas of him therefore must be derived from the contemplation of the small and imperfect, but to a certain extent, faithful picture which he has given us of himself in his image man.

The material world *alone* would tell us nothing of God. It may supply us with types and symbols and illustrations of our ideas respecting him; but the ideas themselves it could not furnish. God is a spirit or mind, and no attribute can we ascribe to him, the existence of which has not been revealed to us by our previous knowledge of our own spiritual nature, or that of other men. "Mind, mind alone," says a poet, "the living fountains in itself contains, of beauteous and sublime," and the assertion is literally true. Material things have no beauty, no sublimity, no excellence, with which mind does not invest them. Of God himself we should know nothing, if he had not

placed a representative within our breasts. "He is a God of truth, justice, mercy," we say; ascribing to him, as reason prompts and revelation sanctions, those qualities which we have been accustomed to admire and love in finite minds.

Here then, it appears to me, we have a valuable test of the truth or falsehood of those views of the divine character which different classes of religionists maintain. If it be true, and I see not how it can be questioned, that we are incapable of conceiving any excellence in God, of which we have not first seen and admired the resemblance, however faint and imperfect, in his creature man, it will follow that we cannot rationally ascribe to God, as a perfection, any quality which in a human being we should unequivocally condemn. On this ground alone I should think myself authorized to reject many of the doctrines of reputed orthodoxy, such for instance as that which denies the efficacy of sincere repentance to insure the forgiving mercy of God, and represents him as refusing to pardon even the penitent offender, unless an innocent substitute should consent to bear the full measure of punishment that prior to his penitence he had threatened to inflict. What should we think of a human parent who should be guilty of such conduct as this doctrine ascribes to our Father who is in heaven? What should we think of the earthly father, who, when the child that had transgressed his law, having "come to himself," with unfeigned, heart-broken penitence implored his pardon, — should refuse to listen to his prayer, unless another child, who had never sinned, would consent to bear a penalty equal to that which the offender had incurred? Would this be paternal mercy? Would it even be common jus-

tice? Assuredly not, according to any human conception of these virtues. To punish the innocent, even at their own request, in lieu of the guilty, would be injustice amongst men; how can it be justice then with God? For a father to refuse to pardon his truly penitent child, we should deem a sufficient proof that he had not a father's heart. Shall we dare then to ascribe to the Universal Father conduct by which any earthly parent would be utterly disgraced! The veracity of God, perhaps it will be said, pledges him to inflict the punishment that he has denounced. What, to inflict upon the innocent punishment denounced against the guilty? Such conduct in my mind would be quite as inconsistent with his veracity, as with his justice or his mercy. To punish the impenitently guilty, God *is* pledged, beyond a doubt, by the sure promise of his word; but to punish the innocent for the guilty, or to punish those whose guilt sincere repentance has effaced, and by whom therefore punishment is no longer needed, this is conduct to which no promise of God that I have ever heard of pledges him. The forgiveness of sins upon repentance, especially where the offended and the offender stand to each other in the relation of parent and child, is a duty which nature teaches. The vindictive and implacable father, repelling the embraces and unsoftened by the tears and entreaties of his penitent offspring, is a character that even the natural feelings of a savage would lead him to condemn; while the father, on the other hand, that sees the returning prodigal from afar, and hastens with open arms to meet him, and sends for the shoes and the ring and the best robe, and kills the fatted calf to welcome his return, commands the ready sympathy and willing suffrage of every unperverted heart.

I have heard an emissary of the Bible Society relate, that on some island or coast of the Levant, (the name of the place I have forgotten,) he once heard the inimitable parable of the prodigal son read by some Turk to an assembly of his countrymen in their native tongue, and that they listened with deep interest, and every now and then expressed the emotion that the tale excited, by an exclamation importing that they believed it to be "all true." "It is all true," said they, and true most assuredly it is, though but a parable, to feelings that have their residence in every bosom; in the bosom of the Turk, as well as that of the Jew or of the Christian. Nature teaches the human father of every age and country, to forgive his penitent child. Without hesitation we should pronounce that father cruel and unnatural, that should refuse to do so. And shall we impute then to God himself conduct which he has taught us by an implanted instinct to condemn? Shall we represent him as incapable of freely forgiving his repentant children, though we should deem ourselves disgraced if we did not so? I cannot believe that revelation and reason, nature and grace are so at variance as some Christians represent them. I cannot think that *that* vindictive justice which refuses to pardon without full satisfaction, and must have the blood of the innocent before it will spare that of the guilty, is really an attribute of the great and good Being who has made the human parent essentially placable, and has taught all the brethren of our race freely to forgive each other if they would hope to be forgiven.

"How often," said the apostle Peter to our Lord, "shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times?" "I say not unto thee until seven times," was the striking reply of Christ, "but until seventy times seven."

Instead of the term brother suppose Peter had employed that of *child* — "How often shall my *child* sin against me and I forgive him," would even he then have imagined "seven times" a sufficient allowance, or would seventy times seven have appeared to him an unreasonable number? No! Peter was a husband — perhaps a father — at all events he had been a son — and small indeed must have been his experience, either in the parental or the filial character, if he had not learned that it is no easy matter to assign limits to the long-suffering and forgiving mercies of a parent's — a *human* parent's heart. Seventy times seven! What father is there, even of our angry and vindictive race, that would not freely forgive his child many more faults than these? And is God less compassionate than man? Is there less of the paternal in his character? Does Scripture tell us so? In my opinion it does not.

The records both of the Jewish and the Christian revelations, if I have read them aright, reveal no doctrine more explicitly than that of the pardon of sin on the sole condition of repentance. To Moses God proclaimed himself "The Lord — the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; but that will by no means clear the guilty" — that is the impenitently guilty. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee," said David, "and mine iniquity have I not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." "Have mercy upon me, O God," he exclaims in another Psalm, "according to thy loving kindness; according unto the mul-

titude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin; for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "To what purpose," says Jehovah by Isaiah his prophet to his people Israel, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with. It is iniquity, even the solemn meetings. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them, and when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear — your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Seek ye the Lord," says the same prophet, "while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abun-

dantly pardon." "The soul that sinneth," says the prophet Ezekiel, "it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die; all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live? Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live ye."

Such is the testimony of the old Covenant, (is it not sufficiently explicit?) to the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins on the condition of repentance alone. Such were the terms in which the messengers of Jehovah to his chosen people declared the pardoning mercy of a long-suffering and gracious God, and in his name entreated those who had sinned against him to repent and be forgiven. The Jewish scriptures at least harmonize in this respect with the natural dictates of the heart, and represent the universal Father as acting what we cannot but deem the parental part by his frail and erring children — recalling them from their wanderings, promising them a kind re-

ception and a free and full forgiveness, if they will only forsake the error of their ways, saying unto them, "Why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves and live."

And do the Christian scriptures bear a different testimony? The parable of the prodigal son, to which I have already referred, is our Lord's own reply to this question. There cannot be a doubt that God himself is the kind, forgiving Father portrayed — and who will venture to say unfaithfully, in that inimitable tale; that the returning prodigal is the representative of every sincerely repentant sinner; and that heartfelt sorrow for sin and a resolute and full return to duty, are there described as the sole conditions on which the universal Father will extend his pardoning mercy to his erring children. No satisfaction, no atonement, in the common sense of those words, is here spoken of — no claims of inexorable justice frowning upon mercy, and forbidding her to follow the dictates of her own generous spirit — no visiting of vengeance upon the head either of the poor penitent himself, or of his unoffending brother — nothing of the kind. The child is sincerely penitent — the father freely forgives. Nature and the gospel speak one language — "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "If we confess our sins," doubtless the apostle means in that spirit of true penitence which will insure our forsaking them, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

What then! some will ask, is the blood of Christ of no avail in procuring forgiveness for us? — that blood of which we are told (1 John, i. 7) that "it cleanseth us from all sin," — that blood in which the first martyred follow-

ers of Jesus are represented by a strong figure as "having washed and made white their robes." "Behold the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist, "that taketh away the sin of the world." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things," says St. Peter, "as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you; who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." And again, "Christ," says the same apostle, "hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God: being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." And once more, in the book of the Apocalypse or Revelation glorified spirits are introduced singing to the Lamb a new song, and saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." In these passages, it will be said, and in many others that might be produced, a connexion is clearly affirmed to subsist between the death of Christ and the removal or forgiveness of sins.

I have no wish, I would reply, to deny this. Assuredly it is the doctrine of scripture, that "Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The only question is, how the death of Christ operates to this end — how this purifying influence is ex-

erted. Is the true Christian forgiven, merely because Christ died for him, and he believes that he did so; or because this belief of his induces that sincere repentance, on which, as the prescribed condition, forgiveness depends? The latter, in my opinion, is the true view of the subject. The death of Christ saves those, and those alone, upon whom the contemplation of that great event in its nature and consequences exerts a sanctifying influence; whom it convincingly persuades of the love of God in Christ Jesus, and constrains from the noblest and the purest motives to die unto sin, even as Christ died for them. The sins of the impenitent, it is conceded on all hands, that even the blood of Christ himself will not wash out; the sins of the penitent, as the very term implies, are washed out already; it is only therefore by *inducing* penitence, as it appears to me, that the cleansing influence of Christ's blood, which is but another name for his death, can be displayed. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," said our Lord himself, referring, as the evangelist tells us, to the mode of his death, "will draw all men unto me." His death he knew would finish his work and give perfection to his example, set the seal to his divine commission and establish his mediatorial authority, produce conviction and excite love in the breasts of those who witnessed and those who heard of it, and thus prove in the hands of God the most powerful means that ever was devised of converting sinners from the error of their ways, and insuring therefore as a necessary consequence the forgiveness of their sins.

We are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ, when that triumph of divine and human love which his death exhibits, operates with such power upon our understand-

ings and our hearts, as to induce us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth more easily beset us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto him who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." It was not to make penitence available to forgiveness, for it always has been so under the dispensation of nature as well as that of Moses and the patriarchs, but it was to produce penitence, that Jesus Christ died for us. Many, I know, are of a different opinion, and contend that, if the blood of Christ had not been shed, the sins even of the penitent could not have been forgiven, but must have subjected them to an eternity of punishment. Punishment, I would ask, for what purpose, to what end, inflicted? For the sake of correction? No; for by the supposition repentance has already taken place, and correction therefore is not needed. For the sake of example then? This can hardly be imagined, since the punishment which the sufferer does not need, and which is not calculated to produce any good effect upon him, can be little calculated to excite either reverence or love for the inflictor in the minds of those who witness it. For the sake of vengeance then, mere useless vengeance, must we suppose that God would have punished the penitent if Jesus had not died? Surely it is not right to ascribe to God a principle of action that would be criminal in man. "Vengeance," it is true God hath said, "is mine;" "I will repay, saith the Lord." But wherefore hath he said this? Because he is essentially wrathful and vindictive, and taketh pleasure in the infliction of suffering and pain? Far from it, — the very contrary is his reason. He forbids us to avenge ourselves, and claims vengeance or retribution for his own, because no purely vindictive or angry

feeling ever can dwell in his bosom, — because his nature as well as his name is love, and because every offender is sure therefore of receiving from him that exact measure and degree of punishment which his offence requires, and of which mercy not less than justice (for where wisdom is infinite, justice and mercy must always be one,) would dictate the infliction.

I cannot therefore believe that the death of Jesus was necessary to make God forgive the truly penitent, whom it would be useless cruelty to punish; but I can and do believe that, in leading sinners to repentance, in exciting those convictions of the understanding and those feelings of the heart which are naturally followed by the hatred of sin and the love and practice of holiness and virtue, the death of Christ has exerted, and will continue to exert, a more powerful influence than any other event that has taken place since the foundation of the world. His blood was indeed shed for the healing of the nations. Because he was "lifted up," he hath drawn multitudes, and in God's own time he shall draw "all men" unto him. The day is coming when he who died for us "shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be" fully "satisfied," — when "in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Let it not then be said that in contending for the placability of God as an essential part of his paternal character, any disposition is manifested to undervalue the work of Christ. Though it be, (I must believe and affirm,) the nature and property of the Father ever to have mercy, and to forgive his penitent children on the sole ground of their penitence, yet it does not follow that we must withhold the debt of heartfelt gratitude from

that beloved Son who laid down his life for his brethren, and to whose holy precepts and self-sacrificing virtue their conversion from sin and consequent reconciliation with the Father are to be ascribed. The parable of the prodigal son, beautiful as it is, and admirably adapted to the purpose for which it was framed, tells but a part of the story of man's salvation. We read in it indeed of the repentant child and the forgiving father, but nothing is said of that father's anxiety to recall the wanderer while he was yet absent, of his sending forth his best beloved son to seek him, of the filial and fraternal spirit in which that mission was performed and of the added joy which was felt in the son's conversion from the consideration, that it was effected by a brother's ardent and self-sacrificing affection employed as the willing instrument of a Father's inextinguishable love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Hereby perceive we the love" of that son himself, "because he "willingly" laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." God sent Christ — Christ gave himself — for what purpose? To satisfy God's vindictive justice? To appease wrath which not even the sinner's heartfelt penitence could lessen or avert, but which demanded either the infinite sufferings of multitudes of finite beings, or the finite sufferings of an infinite being, to quench it? No such thing; the very statement of the dreadful doctrine ought to be its refutation. It was, to give us a perfect law of virtue, to set before us in the second Adam an express moral image of him who can be seen only in his works, — and finally to supply us, in the doctrines of a resurrection to eternal life, and

a retribution according to our deeds, with the most powerful motives that can be imagined for the relinquishment of sin and the cultivation of holiness; — it was for these purposes that God sent Christ to us, and that Christ gladly came. Not that God might forgive, but that man might repent, Christ died. No sacrifice, no bloodshedding, would have been requisite for the former purpose, if the latter could have been accomplished without it. Man needs to be reconciled to God, not God to man. The Father's arms are always open, if the children will only seek them. He never leaves us, if we forsake not him. Examine the scriptures, and you will find that their language uniformly harmonizes with this view. "Be ye reconciled unto God," say they. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." "You that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard."

Such is the uniform language of the Christian scriptures. Man is the *reconciled*, God is the *reconciler* by Christ. We alienate ourselves from the Father by sin; by repentance we return to him who had never forsaken us, but whom we had forsaken. And to lead us to repentance by his precepts, his example, and his promises, Christ voluntarily came, commissioned by his Father, and lived, and taught, and suffered, and died, and rose from the dead for our sakes. Such is our view of the gospel dispensation.

To conclude then, if, on the grounds that have been

stated, we believe it to be the doctrine both of reason and of scripture that God is "faithful and just to forgive" the sins of all that truly repent of them, — if he is in our view the very Father of our Savior's parable, waiting to be gracious, and willing to forgive the moment that the signs of real penitence are shewn, — if, moreover, in order to induce us to repent, he has sent his beloved son to supply us with means and with motives, — how anxious should we be to deserve the love, how fearful of incurring the displeasure, of such a parent! Every generous feeling of the grateful heart should bind us to him. If a God of wrath might compel our obedience, we ought surely to accord it gladly, fervently, and perseveringly to a God of love; — to him who requires our allegiance only because it will be a happiness and a blessing to us to render it, — who, when we wander from him, entreats us with paternal accents to return; puts forth his chastening hand only to correct and to restore, to redeem us from the perils in which we have involved ourselves and to obviate the evil consequences of our perverseness and folly: and when at length we are persuaded by his gracious dealings to retrace our steps, and to seek our happiness, where alone it can be found, in his love and favor, forgives us freely and fully, and mentions our sins to us no more.

In vain do we take these delightful views of the paternal character of God, if they do not lead us to fix our best affections on him, if they do not waken in our breasts feelings of deep remorse, of sincere and effectual sorrow for every instance, in which by thought, word or deed we have wilfully incurred his just displeasure; if they do not incite us to prove our gratitude for the compassion which has borne with us so long,

and the mercy that has pardoned us so often, by the future zeal and fidelity of our obedience.

God grant that we may be amongst those followers of the Lamb who have washed their robes white in his blood, — who have been purified and sanctified by that lesson of perfect love, of entire and unreserved submission to his Father's will, of obedience even unto death, which he hath set before us, — who have learned from a crucified Redeemer to crucify the flesh with all its evil affections and lusts, — who, looking unto Jesus, have imbibed his spirit and become one with him, willing to perform any work of love, however arduous, that the Father may enjoin, or to submit to any sufferings, however painful, that the Father may inflict. Thus may we become disciples of Christ, cleansed both by his life and by his death from sin.

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THE

WORSHIP OF THE FATHER,

A SERVICE OF

GRATITUDE AND JOY.

By WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D.D.

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DISCOURSE.

JOHN, IV. 23, 24.

The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

THE dedication of an edifice to the worship of God is a proper subject of gratitude and joy. Even if the consecration be made by Christians, from whom we differ in opinion, we should still find satisfaction in the service. We should desire that our neighbours, whose convictions of truth and duty require them to separate from us in religious services, should enjoy the same accommodations with ourselves; and it should comfort us to think, that Christianity is so eminently "the power of God unto salvation," its great truths so plain and so quickening, that among all sects acknowledging Christ and consulting his word, its purifying influences, however counteracted by erroneous views, will more or less be felt. We should

rejoice to think, that God can be monopolised by no party, that his spirit is a universal presence, that religion, having its root in the soul of man, can live and flourish amidst many errors, that truth and goodness can no more be confined to a single church, than the light of the sun can be shut up in a private dwelling, that amidst all the diversities of forms, names and creeds, acceptable worship may be offered to God, and the soul ascend to Heaven.

It is the custom of our times to erect beautiful structures for the purposes of the present life, for legislation, for literature, for the arts. But important as these interests are, they are not the noblest. Man's highest relations are not political, earthly, human. His whole nature is not exhausted in studying and subduing outward nature, in establishing outward order, in storing the mind with knowledge which may adorn and comfort his outward life. He has wants too deep, and powers and affections too large for the outward world. He comes from God. His closest connection is with God; and he can find life and peace only in the knowledge of his Creator. Man's glory or true end is not revealed to us in the most magnificent structure which the architect ever reared for earthly uses. A humble spire pointing Heavenward from an obscure church, speaks of man's nature, man's dignity, man's destiny more eloquently than all the columns and arches of Greece and Rome, the mausoleums of Asia, or the pyramids of Egypt. Is it not meet then to be grateful and joyful, when a house is set apart to the worship of God?

This edifice where we now meet is not indeed wholly new. Its frame is older than the oldest of us. But so great are the changes which it has undergone, that, were they who laid its foundations to revisit the earth, they

would trace hardly a feature of their work; and as it is now entered by a new religious congregation, there is a fitness in the present solemnity, by which we dedicate it to the worship of God. My purpose in this discourse is to shew that we should enter this edifice with gratitude and joy, first, because it is dedicated to Worship in the most general sense of that term, and in the second place on account of the particular worship to which it is set apart. I shall close with some remarks of a personal and local character, which may be allowed to one, who was born and brought up on this island, whose heart swells with local attachment, and whose memory is crowded with past years as he stands, after a long absence, within these walls, where he sat in his childhood, and where some of his earliest impressions were received.

I. We ought to enter this house with gratitude and joy, for it is dedicated to Worship. Its end is, that men should meet within its walls to pay religious homage; to express and strengthen pious veneration, love, thankfulness and confidence; to seek and receive pure influences from above; to learn the will of God; and to consecrate themselves to the virtue in which he delights. This edifice is reared to the glory of God, reared like the universe to echo with his praise, to be a monument to his being, perfection and dominion. Worship is man's highest end, for it is the employment of his highest faculties and affections on the sublimest object. We have much for which to thank God, but for nothing so much as for the power of knowing and adoring Himself. This creation is a glorious spectacle; but there is a more glorious existence for our minds and hearts, and that is the Creator. There

is something divine in the faculties by which we study the visible world, and subject it to our wills, comfort, enjoyment. But it is a diviner faculty, by which we penetrate beyond the visible, free ourselves of the finite and the mutable, and ascend to the Infinite and the Eternal. It is good to make earth and ocean, winds and flames, sun and stars tributary to our present well-being. How much better to make them ministers to our spiritual wants, teachers of heavenly truth, guides to a more glorious Being than themselves, bonds of union between man and his Maker.

There have been those who have sought to disparage worship by representing it as an arbitrary, unnatural service, a human contrivance, an invention for selfish ends. Had I time, I should be glad to disprove this sophistry by laying open to you human nature, and showing the deep foundation laid in all its principles and wants for religion; but I can meet the objection only by a few remarks drawn from history. There have been, indeed, periods of history in which the influence of the religious principle seems to have been overwhelmed; but in this it agrees with other great principles of our nature, which in certain stages of the race disappear. There are certain conditions of society, in which the desire of knowledge seems almost extinct among men, and they abandon themselves for centuries to brutish ignorance. There are communities, in which the natural desire of reaching a better lot gives not a sign of its existence, and society remains stationary for ages. There are some, in which even the parental affection is so far dead, that the new-born child is cast into the stream, or exposed to the storm. So the religious principle is in some periods hardly to be dis-

cerned; but it is never lost. No principle is more universally manifested. In the darkest ages there are some recognitions of a superior power. Man feels that there is a being above himself, and he clothes that being in what to his rude conception is great and venerable. In countries where architecture was unknown, men chose the solemn wood or the mountain top for worship; and when this art appeared, its first monuments were temples to God. Before the invention of letters, hymns were composed to the Divinity; and music, we have reason to think, was the offspring of religion. Music in its infancy was the breathing of man's fears, wants, hopes, thanks, praises, to an unseen power. You tell me, my sceptical friend, that religoin is the contrivance of the priest. How came the priest into being? What gave him his power? Why was it that the ancient legislator professed to receive his laws from the gods? The fact is a striking one, that the earliest guides and leaders of the human race looked to the heavens for security and strength to earthly institutions, that they were compelled to speak to men in a higher name than man's. Religion was an earlier bond and a deeper foundation of society than government. It was the root of civilization. It has founded the mightiest empires; and yet men question whether religion be an element; a principle of human nature.

In the earliest ages, before the dawn of science, man recognised an immediate interference of the Divinity in whatever powerfully struck his senses. To the savage the thunder was literally God's voice, the lightning his arrow, the whirlwind his breath. Every unusual event was a miracle, a prodigy, a promise of good, or a menace

of evil from Heaven. These rude notions have faded before the light of science, which reveals fixed laws, a stated order of nature. But in these laws, this order, the religious principle now finds confirmations of God, infinitely more numerous and powerful than the savage found in his prodigies. In this age of the world, there is a voice louder than thunder and whirlwinds, attesting the Divinity; the voice of the wisely interpreted works of God, every where proclaiming wisdom unsearchable, harmony unbroken, and a benevolent purpose in what to ages of ignorance seemed ministers of wrath. In the present, above all times, worship may be said to have its foundation in our nature; for by the improvements of this nature, we have placed ourselves nearer to God as revealed in his universe. The clouds which once hung over the creation are scattered. The heavens, the earth, the plant, the human frame, now that they are explored by science, speak of God as they never did before. His handwriting is brought out, where former ages saw but a blank. Nor is it only by the progress of science, that the foundation of religion is made broader and deeper. The progress of the arts, in teaching us the beneficent uses to which God's works may be applied, in extracting from them new comforts, and in diminishing or alleviating human suffering, has furnished new testimonies to the goodness of the Creator. Still more the progress of society has given new power and delicacy to the sense of beauty in human nature, and in consequence of this, the creation of God has become a far more attractive, lovely and magnificent work than men looked on in earlier times. Above all, the moral susceptibilities and wants, the deeper and more refined feelings, which unfold themselves in the course of

human improvement, are so many new capacities and demands for religion. Our nature is perpetually developing new senses for the perception and enjoyment of God. The human race, as it advances, does not leave religion behind it, as it leaves the shelter of caves and forests; does not outgrow faith, does not see it fading like the mist before its rising intelligence. On the contrary, religion opens before the improved mind in new grandeur. God, whom uncivilized man had narrowed into a local and tutelar Deity, rises with every advance of knowledge to a loftier throne, and is seen to sway a mightier sceptre. The soul, in proportion as it enlarges its faculties and refines its affections, possesses and discerns within itself a more and more glorious type of the Divinity, learns his spirituality in its own spiritual powers, and offers him a profounder and more inward worship. Thus deep is the foundation of worship in human nature. Men may assail it, may reason against it; but sooner can the laws of the outward universe be repealed by human will, sooner can the sun be plucked from his sphere, than the idea of God can be erased from the human spirit, and his worship banished from the earth. All other wants of man are superficial. His animal wants are but for a day, and are to cease with the body. The profoundest of all human wants is the want of God. Mind, spirit, must tend to its source. It cannot find happiness but in the Perfect Mind, the Infinite Spirit. Worship has survived all revolutions. Corrupted, dishonored, opposed, it yet lives. It is immortal as its Object, immortal as the soul from which it ascends.

Let us rejoice then in this house. It is dedicated to Worship; it can have no higher use. The heaven of

heavens has no higher service or joy. The universe has no higher work. Its chief office is to speak of God. The sun, in awakening innumerable forms of animal and vegetable life, exerts no influence to be compared with what it puts forth in kindling the human soul into piety, in being a type, representative, preacher of the glory of God.

II. I have now spoken of worship in the most general sense. I have said that this house, considered as separated to the adoration of God, should be entered joyfully and gratefully, without stopping to inquire under what particular views or forms God is here to be adored. I now proceed to observe, that when we consider the particular worship which is here to be offered, this occasion ought to awaken pious joy. I need not tell you that whilst the religious principle is a part of man's nature, it is not always developed and manifested under the same forms. Men, agreeing in the recognition of a divinity, have not agreed as to the service he may accept. Indeed it seems inevitable, that men, who differ in judgment on all subjects of thought, should form different apprehensions of the invisible, infinite, and mysterious God, and of the methods of adoring him. Uniformity of opinion is to be found no where, and ought to be expected least of all in religion. Who, that considers the vast, the indescribable diversity of men's capacities and means of improvement, in the discipline to which they are subjected, in the schools in which they are trained, in the outward vicissitudes and inward conflicts through which they pass, can expect them to arrive at the same conclusions in regard to their origin and destiny, in regard to the Being from whom they sprung and the world toward which they

tend. Accordingly, religion has taken innumerable forms, and some it must be acknowledged most unworthy of its object. The great idea of God has been seized upon by men's selfish desires, hopes, and fears, and often so obscured that little of its purifying power has remained. Man, full of wants, conscious of guilt, exposed to suffering, and peculiarly struck by the more awful phenomena of nature, has been terror-smitten before the unseen, irresistible power with which he has felt himself encompassed. Hence to appease his wrath and secure his partial regards has been the great object of worship. Hence worship has been so often a pompous machinery, a tribute of obsequious adulation, an accumulation of gifts and victims. Hence worship has been the effort of nations and individuals to bend the Almighty to their particular interests and purposes, and not the reverential, grateful, joyful, filial lifting up of the soul to Infinite Greatness, Goodness, Rectitude and Purity. Even under Christianity human infirmity has disfigured the thought of God. Worship has been debased by fear and selfishness into a means of propitiating wrath, calming fear, and securing future enjoyment. All sects have carried their imperfection into their religion. None of us can boast of exemption from the common frailty. That this house is to be set apart to a perfect, spotless, unerring worship, none of us are so presumptuous as to hope. But I believe, that in the progress of society and Christianity, higher and purer conceptions of the Divinity have been unfolded; and I cannot but believe, that the views of God and of his worship to which this house is now consecrated are so far enlightened, enlarged, purified, as to justify us in entering its walls with great thankfulness and joy.

This house is not reared to perpetuate the superstitions of past ages, nor of the present age. It is not reared to doom the worshipper to continual repetition of his own or other delusions. It is reared for the progress of truth, reared in the faith that the church is destined to new light and new purity, reared in the anticipation of a happier, holier age. As I look round I am met by none of the representations of the Divinity which degraded the ancient temples. My eyes light on no image of wood or stone, on no efforts of art to embody to the eye the invisible Spirit. As I look round, I am met by none of the forms, which Providence, in accommodation to a rude stage of society, allowed to the Jewish people. No altar sends up here the smoke of incense or victims. No priesthood gorgeously arrayed presents to God the material offerings of man. Nor are my eyes pained by the cumbersome ceremonies, by which in later ages Christianity was overlaid, and almost overwhelmed. No childish pomps, borrowed from Judaism and heathenism, obscure here the simple majesty, the sublime spiritual purpose of Christianity. Nor is this house reared for the promulgation of doctrines, which tend to perpetuate the old servility with which God was approached, to make man abject in the sight of his maker, to palsy him with terror, to prostrate his reason. This house is reared to assist the worshipper in conceiving and offering more and more perfectly the worship described in the text, the worship of the Father in spirit and truth. On this topic, on the nature of the worship to be offered in this house, I have many reflections to offer. My illustrations may be reduced to the following heads. This house is reared, first, for the worship of One Infinite Person, and one only; of

Him whom Jesus always distinguished and addressed as the Father. In the next place, it is erected for the worship of God under the special character of Father, that is of a Parental Divinity. In the last place, it is set apart to the worship of Him in Spirit and Truth.

First, You have prepared this edifice, that here you may worship One Infinite Person, even Him and Him only whom Jesus continually calls the Father. One would think, that on this point there could be no difference among Christians. One would think, that Jesus had placed the Object of Christian worship beyond all dispute. It is hard to conceive more solemn, more definite language than he has used. "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Yet it is well known, that very many Christians deny that one person, the Father, is the only proper object of supreme worship. They maintain that two other persons, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are to be joined with him in our adoration, and that the most important distinction of the Christian religion is the worship of God in three persons. Against this human exposition of Christianity we earnestly protest. Whilst we recognise with joy, the sincerity and piety of those who adopt it, we maintain that this gross departure from the simplicity and purity of our faith is fraught with evil to the individual and the church. This house is reared to be a monument to the proper unity of God. We worship the Father.

All the grounds of this peculiarity of our worship cannot of course be expounded in the limits of a discourse, nor indeed do we deem any labored exposition necessary.

We start from a plain principle. We affirm, that if any point in a religious system must be brought out explicitly, must not be left to inference, but set forth in simple, direct, authoritative language, it is the Object of worship. On this point we should expect peculiar explicitness, if a revelation should be communicated for the purpose of giving a new direction to men's minds in this particular. Now among Jews and Gentiles the worship of three infinite persons, one of whom was clothed with a human form, was unknown; and of consequence if this strange, mighty innovation had been intended by Jesus, and had constituted the most striking peculiarity of his system, it must have been announced with all possible clearness and strength. Be it then remembered, that Jesus, in a solemn description of the true worship which he was to introduce, made not an allusion to this peculiarity, but declared, as the characteristic of the true worshippers, that they should worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Be it also remembered, that Jesus never enjoined the worship of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not one injunction to this effect can be found in the gospel or in the writings of the apostles. This strange worship rests on inference alone. "The true worshippers (says the text) shall worship the Father." When his disciples came to him to be instructed in prayer, he taught them to say, Our Father. In his last affectionate discourse he again and again taught his disciples to pray to the Father in his name. This dying injunction, so often and so tenderly repeated, should not for slight reasons be explained away. Still more, just before his death, Jesus himself in presence of his disciples prayed to the Father, and prayed in this language: Father, This is life eternal, that they

(*i. e.* men) should know *thee, the only true God,* and Jesus Christ whom *thou hast sent.*

To these remarks it is common to reply, that we read in the New Testament, that Jesus was again and again worshipped, and that in admitting this he manifested himself to be the object of religious adoration. It is wonderful that this fallacy, so often exposed, should be still repeated. Jesus indeed received worship or homage, but this was not offered as adoration to the Infinite God; it was the homage, which, according to the custom of the age and of the eastern world, was paid to men invested with great authority, whether in civil or religious concerns. Whoever has studied the Scriptures with the least discernment must know, that the word, worship, is used in two different senses, to express, first, the adoration due to the Infinite Creator, and secondly the reverence which was due to sovereigns and prophets, and which of course belonged peculiarly to the most illustrious representative of God, to his beloved Son. Whoever understands the import of the English language in the time when our translation was made, must know that the word was then used to express the homage paid to human superiors, as well as the supreme reverence belonging to God alone. Let not an ambiguous word darken the truth. We are sure, that the worship paid to Christ during his public ministry, was rendered to him as a divine messenger and not as God; for in the first place it was offered, before his teachings had been sufficiently full and distinct to reveal the mystery of his nature, supposing it to have been divine. We pronounce it not merely improbable but impossible, that Jesus, a poor man, a mechanic from Galilee, at the beginning of his mission, when his chosen disciples

were waiting for his manifestation as an earthly prince, should have been adored as the everlasting, invisible God. Again, the titles given him by those who worshipped him, such as Good Teacher, Son of David, Son of God, show us, that the thought of adoring him as the Self-Existent, Infinite Divinity, had no place in their minds. But there is one consideration which sets this point at rest. The worship paid to Jesus during his ministry was offered him in public, in sight of the Jewish people. Now to the Jews, no crime was so flagrant, as the paying of divine homage to a human being, such as they esteemed Jesus to be. Of consequence, had they seen in the marks of honor yielded to Jesus even an approach to this adoration, their exasperation would have burst forth in immediate, overwhelming violence on the supposed impiety. The fact, that they witnessed the frequent prostration of men before Jesus, or what is called the worship of him, without once charging it as a crime, is a demonstration that the act was in no respect a recognition of him as the supreme God.

It is worthy of remark that the passages, which are announced as the strongest proofs of the divine worship of Christ, directly disprove the doctrine, if the connection be regarded. One of these texts is the declaration of Jesus, that we must "honor the Son even as we honor the Father." Hear the whole passage. "The Father hath *given* all judgment to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father *who sent him*." * You observe, that it is not the supreme, underived, divinity

* John v. 22, 23.

of Christ, but the power given him by his Father, which is here expressly declared to be the foundation of the honor challenged for him, and that we are called to honor him, as sent by God. Another passage much relied on is the declaration of Paul, that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue acknowledge him Lord." Read the whole text. "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." * Could language express more clearly, the distinct, derived, and dependent nature of Jesus Christ, or teach that the worship due him is subordinate, having for its foundation the dignity conferred on him by God, and terminating on the Father as its supreme object.

This house, then, is erected to the supreme worship of the Father, to the recognition of the Father only as the self-existent Infinite God. Homage will here be paid to Jesus Christ, and, I trust, a far more profound and affectionate homage than he received on earth, when his spiritual character and the true purposes of his mission were almost unknown. But we shall honor him as the Son, the brightest image, the sent of God, not as God himself. We shall honor him as exalted above every name or dignity in Heaven or earth, but as exalted by God for his obedience unto death. We shall honor him as clothed with power to give life and judge, but shall remember that the Father hath given all judgment and quickening energy

* Philippians ii. 3.

to the Son. We look up with delight and reverence to his divine virtues, his celestial love, his truth, his spirit; and we are sure that in as far as we imbibe these from the affectionate remembrance of his life, death, and triumphs, we shall render the worship most acceptable to this disinterested friend of the human race.

I have said that this house is set apart to the worship of the Father. But this term expresses not only the Person, but the Being to whom it is to be paid. It expresses a peculiar character. It ascribes peculiar attributes to God. It ascribes to him the parental relation and the disposition of a parent. I therefore observe, in the second place, that this house is reared to the adoration of God in his paternal character. It is reared to a Parental Divinity. To my own mind this view is more affecting than the last. Nothing so touches me, when I look round these walls, as the thought that God is to be worshipped here as the Father. That God has not always been worshipped as a Father, even among Christians, you well know. Men have always inclined to think, that they honor God by placing him on a distant throne, much more than by investing him with the mild lustre of parental goodness. They have made him a stern sovereign, giving life on hard terms, preferring his own honor to the welfare of his creatures, demanding an obedience which he gives no strength to perform, preparing endless torments for creatures whom he brings into being wholly evil, and refusing to pardon the least sin, the sin of the child, without an infinite satisfaction. Men have too often been degraded, broken in spirit, stripped of manly feeling, rather than lifted up to true dignity, by their religion. How seldom

has worship breathed the noblest sentiments of human nature. Thanks to Jesus Christ, that he came to bring us to a purifying, ennobling, rejoicing adoration. He has revealed the Father. His own character was a bright revelation of the most lovely and attractive attributes of the Divinity, so that he was able to say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." By his manifestation of the parental character of God, he created religion anew. He breathed a new and heavenly spirit into worship. He has made adoration a filial communion, assimilating us to our Creator. Ought we not then to rejoice in this house as set apart to the worship of the Father, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The Father! In this one word, what consoling, strengthening, ennobling truth is wrapt up. In this single view of God, how much is there to bind us to him with strong, indissoluble, ever-growing love, and to make worship not only our chief duty, but our highest privilege and joy. The Father! Can it be that "the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity," "the Lord of Heaven and earth," the Majesty of the universe, bears to us this relation, reveals himself under this name, and that we, so weak and erring, may approach him with the hope of children? Who cannot comprehend the dignity and blessedness of such worship? Who does not feel, that the man, to whom God's parental character is a deep-felt reality, has, in this conviction, a fountain of strength, hope, and purity springing up into everlasting life?

But to offer this true worship, we must understand distinctly what we mean, when we call God the Father. The word has a deep and glorious import, and, in as far as this is unknown, religion will want life and power. Is

it understood? I am bound to say, that there seems to me a want of purity, of spirituality, in the conception of God's parental relation, even among those Christians who profess to make it the great foundation and object of their worship. Too many rest in vague conceptions of God as their Creator, who supplies their wants and who desires their happiness; and they think, that, thus regarding him, they know the Father. Such imperfect views incline me to state, at some length, what I deem the truth on this point. No truth is so essential to Christian worship. No truth sheds such a flood of light on the whole subject of religion.

My friends, you are to come here to worship the Father What does this term import? It does not mean merely that God is your Creator. He is indeed the Creator, and as such let him be adored. This is his sole prerogative. His and his only is the mysterious power which filled the void space with a universe. His the almighty voice, which called the things which were not, and they came forth. The universe is a perpetual answer to this creating Word. For this, worship God. In every thing hear an exhortation to adore. In the grandeur, beauty, order of nature, see a higher glory than its own, a mysterious force deeper than all its motions; and from its countless voices, from its mild and awful tones, gather the one great lesson which they conspire to teach, the majesty of their author.

But, my friends, God is more than creator. To create, is not to be a father, in the highest sense of that term. He created the mountain, the plant, the insect, but we do not call him their Father. We do not call the artist the father of the statue which he models, nor the mechanician the father of the machine he contrives. It is the distinc-

tion of a father, that he communicates an existence like his own. The father gives being to the child, and the very idea of the child is, that he bears the image as well as receives existence from the power of the parent. God is the father, because he brings into life minds, spirits, partaking of energies kindred to his own attributes. Accordingly the scripture teaches us, that God made man in his own image, after his own likeness. Here is the ground of his paternal relation to the human race, and hence he is called, in an especial sense, the Father of those who make it the labor of life to conform themselves more and more to their divine original. God is "the Father of spirits."

My friends, we are not wholly matter, we are not wholly flesh. Were we so, we could not call God our Father. God is a spirit says the text, and we are spirits also. This our consciousness teaches. We are conscious of a principle superior to the body, which comprehends and controls it. We are conscious of faculties higher than the senses. We do something more than receive impressions passively, unresistingly, like the brute, from the outward world. We analyze, compare, and combine anew the things which we see, subject the outward world to the inquisition of reason, create sciences, rise to general laws, and through these establish an empire over earth and sea. We penetrate beneath the surface which the senses report; search for the hidden causes, inquire for the ends or purposes, trace out the connections, dependencies, and harmonies of nature; discover a sublime unity amidst its boundless variety, and order amidst its seeming confusion; rise to the idea of one all-comprehending and all-ordaining mind; and thus by thought

make, as it were, a new universe, radiant with wisdom, beneficence, and beauty. We are not mere creatures of matter and sense. We conceive a higher good than comes from the senses. We possess, as a portion of our being, a law higher than appetite, nobler and more enduring than all the laws of matter, — the Law of Duty. We discern, we approve, the Right, the Good, the Just, the Holy, and by this sense of rectitude are laid under obligations which no power of the outward universe can dissolve. We have within us a higher force than all the forces of material nature, a power of will which can adhere to duty and to God in opposition to all the might of the elements, and all the malignity of earth or hell. We have thoughts, ideas, which do not come from matter, — the ideas of the Infinite, the Everlasting, the Immutable, the Perfect. Living amidst the frail, the limited, the changing, we rise to the thought of unbounded, eternal, almighty goodness. Nor is this all. While matter obeys mechanical and irresistible laws, and is bound by an unrelaxing necessity to the same fixed, unvarying movements, we feel ourselves to be free. We have power over ourselves, over thought and desire; power to conform ourselves to a law written on our hearts, and power to resist this law. Man must never be confounded with the material, mechanical world around him. He is a spirit. He has capacities, thoughts, impulses, which assimilate him to God. His reason is a ray of the Infinite Reason; his conscience an oracle of the Divinity, publishing the everlasting law of rectitude. Therefore God is his Father. Therefore he is bound to his Maker by a spiritual bond. This we must feel, or we know nothing of the parental relation of God to the human race.

God is the Father, and as such let him be worshipped. He is the Father. By this I understand that he has given being not only to worlds of matter, but to a rational, moral, spiritual universe; and still more I understand, not only that he has created a spiritual family in heaven and on earth, but that he manifests towards them the attributes and exerts on them the influences of a Father. Some of these attributes and influences I will suggest, that the parental character in which God is to be worshipped, may be more distinctly apprehended and more deeply felt.

First, then, in calling God the Father, I understand that he loves his rational and moral offspring with unbounded affection. Love is the fundamental attribute of a father. How deep, strong, tender, enduring, the attachment of a human parent! But this shadows forth feebly the Divine Parent. He loves us with an energy like that with which he upholds the universe. The human parent does not comprehend his child, cannot penetrate the mystery of the spiritual nature which lies hid beneath the infant form. It is the prerogative of God alone to understand the immortal mind to which he gives life. The narrowest human spirit can be comprehended in its depths and destiny by none but its Maker, and is more precious in his sight than material worlds. Is he not peculiarly its father?

Again, in calling God the Father, I understand that it is his chief purpose in creating and governing the universe, to educate, train, form, and ennoble the rational and moral being to whom he has given birth. Education is the great work of a parent, and he who neglects it is unworthy the name. God gives birth to the mind, that it may

grow and rise forever, and its progress is the end of all his works. This outward universe, with its sun and stars and mighty revolutions, is but a school in which the Father is training his children. God is ever present to the human mind to carry on its education, pouring in upon it instruction and incitement from the outward world, stirring up everlasting truths within itself, rousing it to activity by pleasure and pain, calling forth its affections by surrounding fellow-creatures, calling it to duty by placing it amidst various relations, awakening its sympathy by sights of sorrow, awakening its imagination by a world of beauty, and especially exposing it to suffering, hardship, and temptation, that, by resistance, it may grow strong, and by seeking help from above, it may bind itself closely to its Maker. Thus he is the Father. There are those who think, that God, if a parent, must make our enjoyment his supreme end. He has a higher end, — our intellectual and moral education. Even the good human parent, desires the progress, the virtue of his child, more than its enjoyment. God never manifests himself more as our father, than in appointing to us pains, conflicts, trials, by which we may rise to the heroism of virtue, may become strong to do, to dare, to suffer, to sacrifice all things at the call of truth and duty.

Again, in calling God a Father, I understand that he exercises authority over his rational offspring. Authority is the essential attribute of a father. A parent, worthy of that name, embodies and expresses, both in commands and actions, the everlasting law of duty. His highest function is to bring out in the minds of his children the idea of right, and to open to them the perfection of their nature. It is too common a notion, that God, as Father,

must be more disposed to bless than to command. His commands are among his chief blessings. He never speaks with more parental kindness than by that inward voice, which teaches duty and excites and cheers to its performance. Nothing is so strict, so inflexible in enjoining the right and the good, as perfect love. This can endure no moral stain in its object. The whole experience of life, rightly construed, is a revelation of God's parental authority and righteous retribution.

Again. When I call God the Father, I understand that he communicates himself, his own spirit, what is most glorious in his own nature, to his rational offspring; a doctrine almost overwhelming by its grandeur, but yet true, and the very truth which shines most clearly from the Christian scriptures. It belongs to a parent to breathe into the child whatever is best and loftiest in his own soul; and for this end a good father seeks every approach to the mind of the child. Such a father is God. He has created us not only to partake of his works, but to be "partakers of a divine nature," not only to receive his gifts, but to receive himself. As he is a pure spirit, he has an access to the minds of his children, not enjoyed by human parents. He pervades, penetrates our souls. All other beings, our nearest friends, are far from us, foreign to us, strangers, compared with God. Others hold intercourse with us through the body. He is in immediate contact with our souls. We do not discern him because he is too near, too inward, too deep to be recognised by our present imperfect consciousness. And he is thus near, not only to discern, but to act, to influence, to give his spirit, to communicate to us divinity. This is the great paternal gift of God. He has greater gifts than

the world. He confers more than the property of the earth and heavens. The very attributes from which the earth and heavens sprung, these he imparts to his rational offspring. Even his disinterested, impartial, universal goodness, which diffuses beauty, life, and happiness, even this excellence it is his purpose to breathe into and cherish in the human soul. In regard to the spiritual influence by which God brings the created spirit into conformity to his own, I would that I could speak worthily. It is gentle, that it may not interfere with our freedom. It sustains, mingles with, and moves all our faculties. It acts through nature, providence, revelation, society, and experience; and the scriptures, confirmed by reason and the testimonies of the wisest and best men, teach us, that it acts still more directly. God, being immediately present to the soul, holds immediate communion with it, in proportion as it prepares itself to receive and to use aright the heavenly inspiration. He opens the inward eye to himself, communicates secret monitions of duty, revives and freshens our convictions of truth, builds up our faith in human immortality, unseals the deep, unfathomed fountains of love within us, instils strength, peace, and comfort, and gives victory over pain, sin, and death.

This influence of God exerted on the soul to conform it to himself, to make it worthy of its divine parentage, this it is which most clearly manifests what is meant by his being our father. We understand his parental relation to us, only as far as we comprehend this great purpose and exercise of his love. We must have faith in the human soul as receptive of the divinity, as made for greatness, for spiritual elevation, for likeness to God, or God's character as a father will be to us an unrevealed

mystery. If we think, as so many seem to think, that God has made us only for low pleasures and attainments; that our nature is incapable of godlike virtues; that our prayers for the Divine Spirit are unheard; that celestial influences do not descend into the human soul; that God never breathes on it to lift it above its present weakness, to guide it to a more perfect existence, to unite it more intimately with himself, then we know but faintly the meaning of a Father in Heaven. The great revelation in Christianity, of a Paternal Divinity, is still to be made to us.

I might here pause in the attempt to give distinct conceptions of the Father whom we are to worship; but there are two views so suited to us, as sinful and mortal beings, that I cannot pass them over without brief notice. Let me add, then, that, in speaking of God as the Father, I understand that he looks with overflowing compassion on such of his rational offspring as forsake him, as forsake the law of duty. It is the property of the human parent to follow, with yearnings of tenderness, an erring child; and in this he is a faint type of God, who sees his lost sons "a great way off;" who, to recover his human family, spared not his beloved Son, who sends his regenerating spirit into the fallen soul, sends rebuke, and shame, and fear, and sorrow, and awakens the dead in trespasses and sins to a higher life than that which the first birth conferred.

I also understand, in calling God the Father, that he destines his rational, moral creatures to immortality. How ardently does the human parent desire to prolong the life of his child. And how much more must He, who gave being to the spirit with its unbounded faculties,

desire its endless being. God is our father, for he has made us to bear the image of his own eternity, as well as of his other attributes. Other things pass away, for they fulfil their end; but the soul, which never reaches its goal, whose development is never complete, is never to disappear from the universe. God created it to receive forever of his fulness. His fatherly love is not exhausted in what he now bestows. There *is* a higher life. Human perfection is not a dream. The brightest visions of genius fade before the realities of excellence and happiness to which good men are ordained. In that higher life, the parental character of God will break forth from the clouds which now obscure it. His bright image in his children will proclaim the Infinite Father.

I have thus, my friends, set before you the true object of Christian worship. You are here to worship God as your spiritual parent, as the father of your spirits, whose great purpose is your spiritual perfection, your participation of a divine nature. I hold this view of God to be the true, deep foundation of Christian worship. On your reception of it depends the worth of the homage to be offered here. It is not enough to think of God as operating around and without you, as creating material worlds, as the former of your bodies, as ordaining the revolution of seasons for your animal wants. There is even danger in regarding God exclusively as the author of the outward universe. There is danger, lest you feel as if you were overlooked in this immensity; lest you shrink before these mighty masses of matter; lest you see in the unchangeable laws of nature a stern order, to which the human being is a victim, and which heeds not the puny individual in maintaining the general good. It is only by

regarding God as more than Creator, as your spiritual father, as having made you to partake of his spiritual attributes, as having given you a spiritual power worth more than the universe; it is only by regarding his intimacy with the soul, his paternal concern for it, his perpetual influence on it; it is only by these views, that worship rises into filial confidence, hope, joy, and rapture, and puts forth a truly ennobling power. Worship has too often been abject, the offering of fear or selfishness. God's greatness, though a pledge of greatness to his children; and his omnipotence, though an assurance to us of mighty power in our conflict with evil, have generated self-contempt, and discouraged access to him. My friends, come hither to worship God as your spiritual father. No other view can so touch and penetrate the soul; can place it so near its Maker; can open before it such vast prospects; can awaken such transports of praise and gratitude; can bow the soul in such ingenuous sorrow for sin; can so fortify you for the conflict against evil. Ought we not to rejoice that this house is reared for the worship of the spiritual Father?

The exposition which I have given, under this head, of the parental relation of God to the human race is one in which I take the deepest interest. I have felt, however, as I proceeded, that, very possibly, objections would spring up in the minds of some who hear me. There are not a few who are sceptical as to whatever supposes a higher condition of human nature than they now observe. Perhaps some here, could they speak, would say, "We do not see the marks of this fatherly interest of God in man, of which you have spoken. We do not see in man the signs of a being so beloved, so educated, as you have supposed.

His weakness, sufferings, and sins, are surely no proofs of his having been created to receive God's spirit, to partake of the divinity." On this point I have much to say, but my answer must be limited to a few words. I reply, that the love of an Infinite Father may be expected often to work in methods beyond the comprehension of our limited minds. An immortal being in his infancy, cannot, of course, comprehend all the processes of his education, many of which look forward to ages too distant for the imagination to explore. I would add, that, notwithstanding the darkness which hangs over human life, on account of the greatness of our nature, we can yet see bright signatures of the parental concern of God, and see them in the very circumstances which at first create doubt. Because we suffer, it ought not to be inferred, that God is not a father. Suffering, trial, exposure, seem to be necessary elements in the education of a moral being. It is fit, that a being, whose happiness and dignity are to be found in vigorous action and in forming himself, should be born with undeveloped capacities, and be born into a world of mingled difficulties and aids. We do see, that energy of thought, will, affection, virtue, the energy which is our true life and joy, often springs from trial. We can see, too, that it is well that society, like the individual, should begin in imperfection; because men in this way become to each other means of discipline; because joint sufferings and the necessity of joint efforts awaken both the affections and the faculties; because occasion and incitement are thus given to generous sacrifices, to heroic struggles, to the most beautiful and stirring manifestations of philanthropy, patriotism, and devotion. Were I called on to prove God's spiritual parental interes

in us, I would point to the trials, temptations, evils of life; for to these we owe the character of Christ; we owe the apostle and martyr; we owe the moral force and deep sympathy of private and domestic life; we owe the development of what is divine in human nature. Truly, God is our father, and as such to be worshipped.

Having thus set forth very imperfectly, but from a full heart, the excellence of the homage which is here to be rendered to God in his Parental character, I ought now to proceed, according to the plan of this discourse, to show that we should enter this house with joy, because it is set apart to the worship of God in Spirit and in Truth, to an inward not outward worship. In discussing this topic, I might enlarge on the vast and beneficent revolution which Jesus Christ wrought in religion, by teaching that God is a spirit, and to be spiritually adored. I might show how much he wrought for human elevation and happiness, when, in pronouncing the text, he shook the ancient temples to their foundations, quenched the fire on the heathen and Jewish altars, wrested the instruments of sacrifice from the hand of the priest, abolished sanctity of place, and consecrated the human soul as the true house of God. But the nature, grandeur, benefits of this spiritual worship, are subjects too extensive for our present consideration. Instead of discussion, I can only use the words of exhortation. I can only say, that you, who are to assemble in this place, are peculiarly bound to inward worship, for to you especially Christianity is an inward system. Most other denominations expect salvation more or less from what Jesus does abroad, especially from his agency on the mind of God. You expect it from

what he does within your own minds. His great glory, according to your views, lies in his influence on the human soul, in the communication of his spirit to his followers. To you salvation, heaven, and hell have their seat in the soul. To you, Christianity is wholly a spiritual system. Come, then, to this place to worship with the soul, to elevate the spirit to God. Let not this house be desecrated by a religion of show. Let it not degenerate into a place of forms. Let not your pews be occupied by lifeless machines. Do not come here to take part in lethargic repetitions of sacred words. Do not come from a cold sense of duty, to quiet conscience with the thought of having paid a debt to God. Do not come to perform a present task to ensure a future heaven. Come to find heaven now, to anticipate the happiness of that better world by breathing its spirit, to bind your souls indissolubly to your Maker. — Come to worship in spirit and in truth, that is, intelligently, rationally, with clear judgment, with just and honorable conceptions of the infinite Father, not prostrating your understandings, not renouncing the divine gift of reason, but offering an enlightened homage, such as is due to the Fountain of intelligence and truth. — Come to worship with the heart as well as intellect, with life, fervor, zeal. Sleep over your business if you will, but not over your religion. — Come to worship with strong conviction, with living faith in a higher presence than meets the eye, with a feeling of God's presence not only around you, but in the depths of your souls. — Come to worship with a filial spirit, not with fear, dread and gloom; not with sepulchral tones and desponding looks, but with humble, cheerful, boundless trust, with overflowing gratitude, with a love willing and earnest to

do and to suffer whatever may approve your devotion to God. — Come to worship him with what he most delights in, with aspiration for spiritual light and life; come to cherish and express desires for virtue, for purity, for power over temptation, stronger and more insatiable than spring up in your most eager pursuits of business or pleasure; and welcome joyfully every holy impulse, every accession of strength to virtuous purpose, to the love of God and man. — In a word, come to offer a refined, generous worship; to offer a tribute worthy of Him who is the Perfection of truth, goodness, beauty, and blessedness. Adore him with the calmest reason and the profoundest love, and strive to conform yourselves to what you adore.

I have now, my friends, set before you the worship to which this building is set apart, and which, from its rational, filial, pure and ennobling character, renders this solemnity a season for thankfulness and joy. I should not, however, be just to this occasion, or to the great purpose of this house, if I were to stop here. My remarks have hitherto been confined to the worship which is to be offered within these walls, to the influence to be exerted on you when assembled here. But has this house no higher end than to give an impulse to your minds for the very few hours which you are to spend beneath its roof? Then we have little reason to enter it with joy. The great end for which you are to worship here is, that you may worship every where. You are to feel God's presence here, that it may be felt wherever you go, and whatever you do. The very idea of spiritual homage is, that it takes possession of the soul, and becomes a part of our very being. The great design of this act of dedication is,

that your houses, your places of business may be consecrated to God. This topic of omnipresent worship I cannot expand. One view of it, however, I must not omit. From the peculiar character of the worship to which this house is consecrated, you learn the *kind* of worship which you should carry from it into your common lives. It is not uncommon for the Christian teacher to say to his congregation, that when they leave the church, they go forth into a nobler temple than one made with hands, into the temple of the Creation, and that they must go forth to worship God in his works. The views given of the true worship in this discourse, will lead me to a somewhat different style of exposition. I will, indeed, say to you, go from this house to adore God as he is revealed in the boundless universe. This is one end of your worship here. But I would add, that a higher end is, that you should go forth to worship him as he is revealed in his rational and moral offspring, and to worship him by fulfilling, as you have power, his purposes in regard to these. My great aim in this discourse, has been to show that God is to be adored here as the Father of rational and moral beings, of yourselves and all mankind; and such a worship tends directly and is designed to lead us, when we go hence, to recognise God in our own nature, to see in men his children, to respect and serve them for their relationship to the Divinity, to see in them signatures of greatness amidst all their imperfection, and to love them with more than earthly love. We must not look round on the universe with awe, and on man with scorn, for man, who can comprehend the universe and its laws, "is greater than the universe, which cannot comprehend itself." God dwells in every human being more intimately

than in the outward creation. The voice of God comes to us in the ocean, the thunder, the whirlwind; but how much more of God is there in his inward voice, in the intuitions of reason, in the rebukes of conscience, in the whispers of the Holy Spirit. I would have you see God in the awful mountain and the tranquil valley; but more, much more in the clear judgment, the moral energy, the disinterested purpose, the pious gratitude, the immortal hope of a good man. Go from this house to worship God by reverencing the human soul as his chosen sanctuary. Revere it in yourselves, revere it in others, and labor to carry it forward to perfection. Worship God within these walls as universally, impartially good to his human offspring; and go forth to breathe the same spirit. Go forth to respect the rights, and seek the true, enduring welfare of all within your influence. Carry with you the conviction, that to trample on a human being, of whatever color, clime, rank, condition, is to trample on God's child; that to degrade or corrupt a man, is to deface a holier temple than any material sanctuary. Mercy, Love, is more acceptable worship to God, than all sacrifices or outward offerings. The most celestial worship ever paid on earth was rendered by Christ, when he approached man, and the most sinful man as a child of God; when he toiled and bled to awaken what was Divine in the human soul, to regenerate a fallen world. Be such the worship which you shall carry from this place. Go forth to do good with every power which God bestows; to make every place you enter happier by your presence; to espouse all human interests; to throw your whole weight into the scale of human freedom and improvement to withstand all wrong; to uphold all right, and especially

to give light, life, strength, to the immortal soul. He who rears up one child in Christian virtue, or recovers one fellow-creature to God, builds a temple more precious than Solomon's or St. Peter's, more enduring than earth or heaven.

I have now finished the general discussion which this occasion seemed to me to require, and I trust that a few remarks of a personal and local character will be received with indulgence. It is with no common emotion that I take part in the present solemnity. I stand now to teach, where in my childhood and youth I was a learner. The generation which I then knew has almost wholly disappeared. The venerable man, whose trembling voice I then heard in this place, has long since gone to his reward. My earliest friends, who watched over my childhood and led me by the hand to this spot, have been taken. Still my emotions are not sad. I rejoice; for, whilst I see melancholy changes around me, and, still more, feel, that Time, which has bowed other frames, has touched my own, I see that the work of human improvement has gone on. I see that clearer and brighter truths, than were opened on my own youthful mind, are to be imparted to succeeding generations. Herein I do and will rejoice.

On looking back to my early years, I can distinctly recollect unhappy influences exerted on my mind by the general tone of religion in this town. I can recollect, too, a corruption of morals among those of my own age, which made boyhood a critical, perilous season. Still I must bless God for the place of my nativity; for, as my mind unfolded, I became more and more alive to the

beautiful scenery which now attracts strangers to our island. My first liberty was used in roaming over the neighboring fields and shores; and amid this glorious nature, that love of liberty sprung up, which has gained strength within me to this hour. I early received impressions of the great and the beautiful, which, I believe, have had no small influence in determining my modes of thought and habits of life. In this town I pursued, for a time, my studies of theology. I had no professor or teacher to guide me; but I had two noble places of study. One was yonder beautiful edifice, now so frequented and so useful as a public library; then so deserted, that I spent day after day, and sometimes week after week, amidst its dusty volumes, without interruption from a single visiter. The other place was yonder beach, the roar of which has so often mingled with the worship of this place, my daily resort, dear to me in the sunshine, still more attractive in the storm. Seldom do I visit it now without thinking of the work, which there, in the sight of that beauty, in the sound of those waves, was carried on in my soul. No spot on earth has helped to form me so much as that beach. There I lifted up my voice in praise amidst the tempest. There, softened by beauty, I poured out my thanksgiving and contrite confessions. There, in reverential sympathy with the mighty power around me, I became conscious of power within. There, struggling thoughts and emotions broke forth, as if moved to utterance by nature's eloquence of the wind and waves. There began a happiness surpassing all worldly pleasures, all gifts of fortune, the happiness of communing with the works of God. Pardon me this reference to myself. I believe that the worship of which

I have this day spoken, was aided in my own soul by the scenes in which my early life was passed. Amidst these scenes, and in speaking of this worship, allow me to thank God that this beautiful island was the place of my birth.

Leaving what is merely personal, I would express my joy, and it is most sincere, in the dedication of this house, regarded as a proof and a means of the diffusion of Christian truth. Some, perhaps, may think, that this joy is not a little heightened by seeing a church set apart to the particular sect to which I am said to belong. But, I trust, that what you have this day heard will satisfy most, if not all, who hear, that it is not a sectarian exultation to which I am giving utterance. I indeed take pleasure in thinking, that the particular views which I have adopted of the disputed doctrines of religion, will here be made known; but I rejoice much more in thinking, that this house is pledged to no peculiar doctrines; that it is not erected to bind my own or any man's opinions on this or on future times; that it is consecrated to free investigation of religious truth; to religious progress; to the right of private judgment; to protestant and Christian liberty. Most earnestly do I pray, that a purer theology, that diviner illuminations, that a truer worship than can now be found in our own or in any sect, may be the glory of this house. We who now consecrate it to God, believe in human progress. We do not say to the spirit of truth, "Thus far and no farther." We reprobate the exclusive, tyrannical spirit of the churches of this age, which denounce, as an enemy to Christianity, whoever, in the use of his intellectual liberty, and in the interpretation of God's word for himself, may differ from the traditions and

creeds which have been received from fallible forefathers. We rear these walls, not to a sect, but to religious, moral, intellectual, protestant, Christian liberty.

I rejoice that this temple of liberty is opened on this spot. I feel that this town has a right to an establishment, in which conscientious Christians may inquire and speak without dreading the thunders of excommunication, in which protestantism will not be dishonored by the usurpations of the Romish church. This island, like the state to which it belongs, was originally settled by men, who came hither for liberty of conscience, and in assertion of the right to interpret for themselves the word of God. Religious freedom was the very principle on which this town was founded, and I rejoice to know, that the spirit of religious freedom has never wanted champions here. I have recently read a very valuable discourse, which was delivered in this town about a century ago, and just a century after the cession of this island to our fathers by the Indians, and which breathes a liberality of thought and feeling, a reverence for the rights of the understanding and the conscience, very rare at that time in other parts of the country, and very far from being universal now. Its author, the Reverend Mr. Callender, was pastor of the first Baptist church in this place, the oldest of our churches, and it was dedicated to a descendant of the venerable Coddington, our first governor. The spirit of religious liberty which pervades this discourse, has astonished as well as rejoiced me, and it should thrill the hearts of this people. Let me read a few sentences: —

"It must be a mean contracted way of thinking, to confine the favor of God, and the power of godliness to one set of specu'ative opinions, or any particular exter-

nal forms of worship. How hard must it be to imagine, that all other Christians but ourselves, must be formal, and hypocritical, and destitute of the grace of God, because their education or capacity differs from ours, or that God has given them more or less light than to us; though we cannot deny, they give the proper evidence of their fearing God by their working righteousness, and show their love to him by keeping what they understand he has commanded; and though their faith in Christ Jesus purifies their hearts, and works by love, and overcomes the world. It would be hard to show, why liberty of conscience, mutual forbearance and good will, why brotherly kindness and charity is not as good a centre of unity as a constrained uniformity in external ceremonies, or a forced subscription to ambiguous articles. Experience has dearly convinced the world that unanimity in judgment and affection cannot be secured by penal laws. Who can tell, why the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace is not enough for Christians to aim at? And who can assign a reason why they may not love one another though abounding in their own several senses? And why if they live in peace, the God of love and peace may not be with them?

"There is no other bottom but this to rest upon, to leave others the liberty we should desire ourselves; the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free."

Such was the liberal spirit expressed in this town a hundred years ago. I would it were more common in our own day.

Another noble friend of religious liberty threw a lustre on this island immediately before the revolution. I mean the Reverend Dr. Styles, pastor of the Second Congregational church, and afterwards President of Yale College.

This country has not perhaps produced a more learned man. To enlarged acquaintance with physical science he added extensive researches into philology, history, and antiquities; nor did his indefatigable mind suffer any opportunity to escape him of adding to his rich treasures of knowledge. His virtues were proportioned to his intellectual acquisition. I can well remember how his name was cherished among his parishioners, after years of separation. His visit to this place was to many a festival. When little more than a child, I was present at some of his private meetings with the more religious part of his former congregation; and I recollect how I was moved by the tears and expressive looks with which his affectionate exhortations were received. In his faith he was what was called a moderate Calvinist; but his heart was of no sect. He carried into his religion the spirit of liberty which then stirred the whole country. Intolerance, church tyranny, in all its forms, he abhorred. He respected the right of private judgment, where others would have thought themselves authorised to restrain it. A young man, to whom he had been as a father, one day communicated to him doubts concerning the trinity. He expressed his sorrow; but mildly, and with undiminished affection told him to go to the scriptures, and to seek his faith there, and only there. His friendships were confined to no parties He desired to heal the wounds of the divided church of Christ, not by a common creed, but by the spirit of love. He wished to break every yoke, civil and ecclesiastical, from men's necks. To the influence of this distinguished man in the circle in which I was brought up, I may owe in part the indignation which I feel towards every invasion of human rights. In my earli-

est years, I regarded no human being with equal reverence. I have his form before me at this moment almost as distinctly as if I had seen him yesterday, so strong is the impression made on the child through the moral affections.

Let me add one more example of the spirit of religious freedom on this island. You may be surprised, perhaps when you hear me name in this connexion the venerable man, who once ministered in this place, the Reverend Dr. Hopkins. His name is indeed associated with a stern and appalling theology, and it is true that he wanted a toleration towards those who rejected his views. Still in forming his religious opinions, he was superior to human authority; he broke away from human creeds; he interpreted God's word for himself; he revered reason, the oracle of God within him. His system, however fearful, was yet built on a generous foundation. He maintained that all holiness, all moral excellence, consists in benevolence, or disinterested devotion to the greatest good; that this is the character of God; that love is the only principle of the divine administration. He taught that sin was introduced into the creation, and is to be everlastingly punished, because evil is necessary to the highest good. To this government, in which the individual is surrendered to the well being of the whole, he required entire and cheerful submission. Other Calvinists were willing that their neighbours should be predestined to everlasting misery for the glory of God. This noble-minded man demanded a more generous and impartial virtue, and maintained that we should consent to our own perdition, should be willing ourselves to be condemned, if the greatest good of the universe, and the manifestation of the

divine perfections should so require. True virtue, as he taught, was an entire surrender of personal interest to the benevolent purposes of God. Self-love he spared in none of its movements. He called us to seek our own happiness, as well as that of others, in a spirit of impartial benevolence; to do good to ourselves, not from self-preference, not from the impulse of personal desires, but in obedience to that sublime law, which requires us to promote the welfare of each and all within our influence. I need not be ashamed to confess the deep impression which this system made on my youthful mind. I am grateful for this stern teacher for turning my thoughts and heart to the claims and majesty of impartial, universal benevolence From such a man, a tame acquiescence in the established theology was not to be expected. He indeed accepted the doctrine of predestination in its severest form; but in so doing he imagined himself a disciple of reason as well as revelation. He believed this doctrine to be sustained by profound metaphysical argumentation, and to rest on the only sound philosophy of the human mind, so that in receiving it, he did not abandon the ground of reason. In accordance with his free spirit of inquiry, we find him making not a few important modifications of Calvinism. The doctrine that we are liable to punishment for the sin of our first parent he wholly rejected; and not satisfied with denying the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity, he subverted what the old theology had set forth as the only foundation of divine acceptance, namely the imputation of Christ's righteousness or merits to the believer. The doctrine that Christ died for the elect only, found no mercy at his hands. He taught that Christ suffered equally for all mankind. The

system of Dr. Hopkins was indeed an effort of reason to reconcile Calvinism with its essential truths. Accordingly his disciples were sometimes called, and willingly called, Rational Calvinists. The impression which he made was much greater than is now supposed. The churches of New-England received a decided impression from his views; and though his name, once given to his followers, is no longer borne, his influence is still felt. The conflict now going on in our country, for the purpose of mitigating the harsh features of Calvinism, is a stage of the revolutionary movement to which he more than any man gave impulse. *I* can certainly bear witness to the spirit of progress and free inquiry which possessed him. In my youth I preached in this house at the request of the venerable old man. As soon as the services were closed, he turned to me with an animated, benignant smile, and using a quaintness of expression which I need not repeat, said to me, that theology was still imperfect, and that he hoped I should live to carry it towards perfection. Rare and most honorable liberality in the leader of a sect! He wanted not to secure a follower, but to impel a young mind to higher truth. I feel, that ability has not been given me to accomplish this generous hope; but such quickening language from such lips, though it could not give strength, might kindle desire and elevate exertion.—Thus the spirit of religious freedom has not been wanting to this island. May this spirit, unawed by human reproach, unfettered by human creeds, availing itself gratefully of human aids, and above all looking reverently to God for light, dwell in the hearts of those who are to minister, and of those who shall worship within these walls. May this spirit spread far and wide and redeem the Christian world from the

usurpations of catholic and protestant infallibility, from uncharitableness, intolerance, persecution and every yoke which has crushed the human soul.

I have done with the personal and the local. In conclusion, let me revert for one moment to the great topic of this discourse. My friends, the spiritual worship of which I have this day spoken, is something *real*. There *is* a worship in the spirit, a worship very different from standing in the church, or kneeling in the closet, a worship which cannot be confined to set phrases and asks not the clothing of outward forms, a thirst of the soul for its Creator, an inward voice, which our nearest neighbour cannot hear, but which pierces the skies. To the culture of this spiritual worship we dedicate this house. My friends, rest not in offering breath, in moving the lips, in bending the knee to your Creator. There is another, a nearer, a happier intercourse with Heaven, a worship of love, sometimes too full and deep for utterance, a union of mind with him closer than all earthly friendships. This is the worship to which Christ calls. Christ came not to build churches, not to rear cathedrals with Gothic arches, or swelling domes, but to dedicate the human soul to God. When God "bows the heavens and comes down," it is not that he may take up his abode beneath the vault of a metropolitan temple, it is not that he is drawn by majestic spires or by clouds of fragrance, but that he may visit and dwell in the humble, obedient, disinterested soul. This house is to moulder away. Temples hewn from the rock will crumble to dust, or melt in the last fire. But the inward temple will survive all outward change. When winds and oceans and suns shall

have ceased to praise God, the human soul will praise him. It will receive more and more divine inspirations of truth and love; will fill with its benevolent ministry wider and wider spheres; and will accomplish its destiny by a progress towards God as unlimited, as mysterious, as enduring as Eternity.

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REASON

AND

REVELATION.

By Rev. A. A. LIVERMORE,

PRINTED FOR THE

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REASON AND REVELATION.

The present tract will be devoted to the vindication and enforcement of the great truth, often overlooked and often misunderstood, that reason is to be used in religion as in other departments of life, and that man's ultimate reliance, for faith and practice, is upon his own mind, aided by God's word.

Man is gifted with a faculty or capacity, variously called in common parlance, reason, mind, common sense, understanding, — that searches, apprehends, and judges concerning all that falls within its cognizance. By this power, in proportion as it is swayed by hopes and fears, passion and conscience, as it is developed by education, or cramped by ignorance, he is able to discriminate between truth and error upon all subjects whatsoever. By this he generalizes principles from facts, and predicts facts from principles. Into this crucible he throws arts, sciences, philosophies, religions, and the dross and the gold are divided. Upon this foundation he relies for opinions, belief, and practice. It is his sun and centre, his point

of departure, and his point of arrival. For by it he determines the meaning even of Scripture itself, decides therefore what to believe, what do, whom worship, and which of the numerous and increasing theories of Christianity he shall adopt as his own.

This capacity is a divine principle in the human soul, as well as Revelation a divine communication. Both are the offspring of the Deity. This faculty is divine, as it is the direct handiwork of the Creator, not an inheritance from Adam, for 'there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." From moment to moment, he impregnates it with his celestial fire, gives it its constant supply, and speaks through it with his venerable authority, which none shall gainsay with impunity. It is divine, as it lifts man above all other creatures of the earth, gives him a citizenship and a fellowship with the spiritual intelligencies of higher worlds, and distantly assimilates the finite child to the infinite Father, enabling us to 'be followers of God, as dear children.'

Still man may pervert it. What does he not pervert? It is not infallible, like Revelation; but it is the instrument which God has given us to ascertain the import of even Revelation. He who renounces it, abandons one of the highest prerogatives of his being. He who brings against it 'a railing accusation,' does nothing less than slander the most illustrious specimen of the divine workmanship in the world. He who leaves it undeveloped, or allows it to languish and decay, commits a deadlier suicide than taking the bodily life. He who loses it and becomes insane, is justly deemed the most unfortunate of his kind, as absolved even from moral accountability,

dead to the power of improvement, and, for the time being, sunken into a condition as much worse than that of the dumb animal, as there remain to him greater powers for his own and others' injury. Yet even in its wildest aberrations it retains the glimmerings of its original heavenly light. Its ruins, like those of the fallen archangel, betoken its primitive splendor and might. The craziest fanatic sometimes speaks astonishing truths, and the walls of the lunatic's abode have been scribbled over with verses of uncommon beauty and power.

This faculty, in conjunction with conscience and the moral affections, composes man's religious nature and enables him to receive a revelation. Thus he has a foundation to stand upon. He can understand and apply to his wants the gracious communications of his Maker, and thereby 'lay hold on eternal life.'

Since, then, man was endowed with reason, it was to be expected that if God made a revelation of his will, it would address itself to, and harmonize with, that capacity in the recipient. Since we were created with religious natures and wants, it would have been a signal and perplexing departure from the customary modes of our heavenly Father's administration, if the religion he had commissioned to exercise our natures, and satisfy our wants, had warred against them.

What was to be expected has been fulfilled. The truths of the Gospel possess the same congeniality with the human soul, as bread with the stomach, and light with the eye. There is no discrepancy between the workmanship of God in the soul, and the ways of God in the Bible; but the nicest concord, at once beautiful and convincing. The Almighty does not contradict himself.

Reason and Revelation are twin agents, co-workers in the cause of the soul. The mind and truth, the soul and its Saviour, have a reciprocal fitness, each for each. Revelation is the teacher, Reason the pupil. Revelation assists, perfects, does not supplant or dethrone Reason. Without Revelation, Reason were in a cold, pale twilight; with it, man is surrounded with the pure light and warm flush of day. Without Reason, Revelation were of no more significance to man than to the ox, or the dove; with it, the saving truth is received, loved, and followed. How many works have been powerfully and successfully written to elucidate the internal evidence of Revelation, a large part of which consists of the facts of this exquisite harmony between the soul's capacities and needs, and the truths and promises of the Gospel.

But in dwelling thus upon the alliance between Revelation and Reason, it is not in the least implied that man does not receive through the Scriptures, original, vital communications from his Maker. They teach many things above Reason, but not one syllable against it. What the wisest sages had speculated about with painful uncertainty, Jesus taught with the assurance of consciousness. The human heart, the divine counsels, and the secrets of eternity, were unveiled in his discourse, and stood forth as breathing realities. Old truths sprang into new life and power. What Reason in her best champions had only felt after, never fully found, still less proved, and efficiently spread amongst men, was now clothed with gigantic might and celestial beauty, and went forth 'conquering and to conquer.' He gave us a heavenly Father, and opened a heavenly hereafter before us, — thus giving the soul, in its dark and discouraging struggle with evil,

all needed and possible guidance, strength, warning, and consolation. All is plain and simple, yet how glorious!

'I hope,' said the distinguished philosopher and Christian, John Locke, 'it is no derogation to the Christian religion to say, that the fundamentals of it, that is, all that is necessary to be believed in by all men, is easy to be understood by all men. This I thought myself authorized to say, by the easy and very intelligible articles insisted on by our Saviour and his Apostles; which contain nothing but what could be understood by the bulk of mankind.' Men like Locke, Milton, and Newton, the mightiest spirits God ever kindled on earth, have testified to the reasonableness of Christianity. Locke wrote a book to show it. Revelation has come from their searching investigations, like thrice refined gold from the furnace, bright and undiminished. Its evidences, its doctrines, its promises, its services, are all seen to be founded in nature and common sense, as well as guarantied by the explicit will of the Most High. They have consequently remained fixed and firm against the assaults of acute infidels, as the steady earth beneath the gusty winds that sweep over its surface. They commend themselves to the good understandings of all, and testify that religion is eminently 'a reasonable service.'

But here a distinction is needed, that is often neglected. Because Revelation does not conflict with Reason, though it soars above Reason, it is far from being asserted that it does not contend against human nature and character, under some of their aspects. It harmonizes with the higher, but it clashes with the lower nature. This is our battle, spirit against flesh, and flesh against spirit; in taking sides with the spirit, Revelation there-

fore fights against the dominion of the flesh. Indeed, in that identical conflict consists its virtue, its use, just as medicine makes an enemy of disease, but not of the human constitution. Religion struggles, as for life, against the passions and appetites in their excesses. Yet this contest is often mistaken for a discordance between Reason and Revelation, whereas it is a notable instance of their agreement. For when Reason was too weak of her single strength to cope with the lusts of the flesh, Revelation descended as a kind friend to restore the reins to the rightful possessor. The strict Scripture doctrines may strive against worldliness and selfishness, they may prick men's hearts with pungent expositions of truth, earnest enforcements of duty; Heaven be thanked that they do, but they are all justified by Reason. They are never wanting in the most perfect rationality. For example, the truths that God is One, is a Spirit, is to be worshipped in spirit and truth, — are hard truths for a sensual world to feel and obey, but they stand good to Reason. The command to love our enemies is probably the hardest in the Bible to comply with, honestly and heartily, but not because it is irrational; it is seen, when all the circumstances of the case are considered, to be reasonable, sensible; but because it puts the curb on some of the strongest feelings of the human heart. It is at the antipodes of folly or absurdity, but it enjoins self-restraint, forbearance, forgiveness, — therefore the natural, that is, the sensual, selfish man, receives it not, loves it not. So, universally. In one word, Revelation may conflict with man's evil dispositions, and check his wrong tendencies; it is a noble proof of its divinity and its efficacy, that it does — that it makes alliance with Reason

and conscience against their formidable assailants, but with Reason and conscience it no more wars than with the Supreme Intelligence from which it sprung. Its language is ever that of 'truth and soberness,' its spirit a 'spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.'

Since, therefore, Reason capacitates man for Revelation, and harmonizes with it, we are not surprised, but prepared, to find that Revelation itself enjoins with deep emphasis the exercise of Reason. Perpetually it appeals to the rational principles in man. It invites and urges him to test the disclosures it makes by the light of his God-given spirit, 'the elder scripture.' Unlike some of its friends, so far from denying Reason and frowning upon free investigation, it commands the vigorous action of the mind upon its truths as a duty. Its precepts are, to 'Search the Scriptures; not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God; to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good; to understand the Scriptures; to judge what is right; to be men and not children in understanding; to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.' Indeed, what is the aim and sum of Revelation, but God reasoning with and instructing his erring children, making known to them truths above and beyond what their unaided minds could have reached; setting before them motives loftier than this world could furnish, and leading their hopes and aspirations upward to a life of eternal bliss and glory.

In the next place, it may be remarked, that facts substantiate what has now been said of the connexion between Reason and Revelation, so far as the practice of all denominations of Christians extends. Not one ex-

ception can be found. All use reason, all appeal to it, all abide by it, or by what to them is Reason. Where is the sect that does not exercise the understanding upon the doctrines of Christianity and the duties of life? Is it said that the Roman Catholic rests his faith on tradition and the infallibility of his Church? Then tradition and the infallibility of his Church are his sufficient reasons for his faith. He keeps on good terms with his understanding. Is it asserted that the Mystic believes in emotions, feelings, divine promptings, which he can neither analyze nor understand? Then certain operations of his own mind are his ultimate grounds of faith, and to him entirely rational grounds. He has no quarrel with reason in his own soul, however mad he may seem to other men. Is it stated that some believe in doctrines which present a downright contradiction to Reason, as that there are three persons in the Godhead, and yet only one God? Still their faith is just as rational to them, as mine is to me, who believe that there is only one person in the Godhead. Their faith is placed on that which has to them the greatest evidence of its being true, and is accordingly the most reasonable to them. Is it said that they place their faith not on Reason, but on the Bible? In that case, the Bible is their Reason; at least, they have reasons for making the Bible their Reason. Thus all sects do, in fact, whatever may be said to the contrary, appeal to Reason, first or last, in one way or another. What are religious controversies, in which all sects have participated, but reasonings on this side and that, to develope the relative strength of each? What are the volumes of Evidences of Christianity, of which every denomination has contributed its useful portion, but a solemn appeal at

the bar of Reason in vindication of the truths of the Bible? What are Commentaries, but helps to make the Scriptures better understood, to take faith off of the ground of implicit trust, and plant it more on that of personal knowledge and conviction? What are Sunday schools, sermons, lectures, tracts, periodicals, but means to make more intelligent, as well as more pious Christians? Is it not most evident, from this review of the beliefs and operations of all Christian denominations, that they use Reason in religion as in other departments of life? These interrogations are so plain that none but affirmative answers can be given them. It will therefore be seen to be a mistake, or to be mere affectation, to say that Reason is not to be employed in matters of faith and practice, when in truth all use it habitually, and must use it more or less, or sink themselves to the level of the irrational brute. No man can, no man does, proceed one step in belief, in interpretation, in conduct, without the guidance of Reason.

Wherein then, it may occur to some minds, are Unitarians, or rational Christians, different in respect to this point from other sects, which would perhaps deem the epithet rational to be a stigma? They are said to be different; it is rumored all over the country that they are a denomination by themselves; Christendom looks upon them with suspicion. What is their dark offence? They reason, but so does the Roman Catholic. They use their understandings in religion, but so does the Trinitarian. They throw the lights of biblical criticism upon the Holy Scriptures, that they may the more nearly arrive at the true sense of the inspired volume, but so equally does the Episcopalian. What then is their crime? Wherein is the

point of difference? Simply, so far as yet appears, the distinction consists in their arriving at different results by the exercise of Reason; not in their using Reason, and other sects not using it. They lay stress upon the tenet which all actually employ. They avow earnestly the principle which all adopt, if we may judge of their rules by their practice.

But here a new element appears. It is charged upon them that they make Reason their goddess, that they exalt her above Revelation. If this were so, then they would indeed be an unique sect. But is it so? Let us see whether, in matters of Faith and in the interpretation of the Scriptures, they do not take the same course which all take.

First, in regard to Faith. It may be laid down as an axiom, that belief always rests on evidence of some sort, and that where there is no evidence, it is quite impossible that there should be any belief; the nature of faith precludes it. The evidence may be small — may be unsatisfactory to the majority of men; but evidence of some kind, of some degree, is indispensable. If a doctrine is positively irrational, it may be a call with here and there a mind to put forth more faith to embrace it, but with most it would prevent all faith whatever. But even in this extreme case, the reason that is wanting in one direction is supplied in another, else faith were still an impossibility. Thus some Christians believe in doctrines which they acknowledge are irrational, because the creed, or church, or Bible, as they suppose, upholds them; and then the creed, or church, or Bible, is their reason and evidence, though all other reason and evidence be against them. The Unitarian exercises his reason in settling the

foundations of his faith; thus doing as all others do, and must do. But the question arises, does he not set Reason above Revelation? So it has been reported every where. No, never. He finds no occasion for such a competition between the dictates of his mind and the doctrines of the Scriptures. What Revelation teaches, he believes in, because it is perfectly rational, as well as because Revelation teaches it. Is it inquired, whether he would believe in a doctrine that was entirely irrational, provided the Scriptures contained it? His reply is, that he is not reduced to this alternative of crucifying Reason, or renouncing Revelation. The supposition is impossible. The Bible never does teach any thing but what is reasonable, and therefore nothing but what he can and does believe. It were a daring proposition to advance, that God has contradicted, in one mode of his communication of truth, what he teaches us by another. It is just as absurd to ask, whether we would believe an irrational doctrine because Revelation taught it, as whether we would do a vicious act because Revelation enjoined it. The cases are parallel, but neither is for a moment supposable. The Bible violates neither reason nor conscience; it offers no irrational doctrine for us to believe,—it commands no vicious deed for us to do.

To the view now presented of the necessity of intelligibleness in what we believe, and of evidence as a basis for faith, it is objected, that we are surrounded by mysteries, understand little in reality, and believe in many things which we cannot explain. Two things are confounded in such an objection, which ought to be carefully distinguished. I may believe in that which is above Reason, but that is quite different from believing in that

which is against Reason. I may believe in mysteries, or, in the popular sense of that word, in many incomprehensible things, — things above men's experience and knowledge. I believe, for example, in the existence of God, which I can neither comprehend nor explain. But observe, I believe in the fact that He exists, which fact is supported by most abundant proof; I do not believe in the mode of his existence; I am not assured how he fills all with his august presence, and I can only believe as far as I have evidence for my belief. So far as his existence is a fact, I believe in it; so far as it is a mystery, I cannot believe in it, because I have no grounds for belief. I believe in the revolutions of worlds around worlds, through all the boundless heavens above and below, but I cannot understand nor elucidate the nature and essence of those centripetal and centrifugal forces that bind those stupendous masses in the exactest harmony as they fly on their swift courses. I believe in the fact for which there is good evidence, not in the mystery, the how, for which there is none. The secrets of attraction and gravitation cannot be classed amongst matters of faith, because there is no proof what those secrets are. The facts are all that can come within the bounds of credence. Nobody else, any more than the Unitarian, believes in irrational doctrines, that is, doctrines irrational to the believer. It cannot be done. The doctrines must move over from the ground of no reason to the ground of reason, before they can be believed. Evidence of many kinds there is, but evidence of some kind there must be, or belief is dead. The most absurd things in the world have been believed, not as they were absurd, but as they had some basis of reason, however narrow or shallow. To speak of Faith without reason, would be to say that

there were rivers without fountains, and effects without causes. In exercising his Reason in matters of Faith, the Unitarian does no more than, nor differently from, all other Christian believers.

Next, turn to the interpretation of the Scriptures: Unitarians are accused of setting their reason up as a standard above the Bible. But they do no such thing. They but do what all do. If they err, then all err, in using their minds to understand the word of God. The Bible is our standard. What it teaches respecting truth and duty, we receive, we believe in, with implicit love and trust. But the grand, dividing question, is, what *does* it teach? It is not the same thing, the same sense, to all. The Bible is nothing more nor less than the meaning of the Bible, and that meaning varies with every mind. It teaches one set of doctrines to the Baptist, another to the Quaker, another to the Methodist. 'Men labor,' as Cecil acutely remarked, 'to make the Bible *their* Bible.' In fact every sect has its own Bible, inasmuch as each has its own sense of the book. The Scriptures, then, are the standard, but it is a different standard to different men. Religious controversy is the struggle which each denomination makes to render the Bible *their* Bible. Reformation in the Christian Church is but the constant bringing of man's sense of sacred Writ nearer to its absolute sense, the one God gave it; the advancement of the imperfect human idea up to the glorious clear significance of the divine mind.

Nor is this difficulty of arriving at the absolute truth of the sacred volume, escaped by the instrumentality of creeds. For if not at first, which is generally the case, yet afterwards, the creed, like the Bible, conveys different

senses to different minds, and so what was designed for an explanation, soon needs itself to be explained. Hence arise ambiguities and discussions; the sectarian banner becomes itself the signal of war; and old churches and assemblies fall to pieces to be re-organized into new ones.

Since, then, the Bible, though the directory of Faith and Practice, is one thing to one man and another to another, according to what each understands it to teach; since there is variance of belief even touching fundamental points, — what is done by all, but to fall back on their own minds, enlightened by Revelation, as the last criterion. Each one claims and allows the supremacy of the Scriptures, but he must rely on his own mind to tell him what they teach. Probably no two persons, who have read the Bible understandingly, and reflected earnestly on religious subjects, think exactly alike. The more men reflect, the more they differ, and the smaller their differences become, because they approximate continually nearer to absolute truth. Modern civilization and free thought multiply sects in profusion, but their influence is to make 'the crooked straight, and the rough ways smooth,' and to unite all u on the essentials of Christianity.

From these remarks, it will be clear to every candid mind, that in regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures, as well as in matters of Faith, Unitarians proceed upon no novel and dangerous principle of using their reason, which is not equally adopted by others as their rule. Precisely like other denominations, they refer to the Bible as their standard, and to their minds to inform them what that standard requires. They would not only read, but

understand the word with the faculties God has bestowed for that purpose. They hold that He intended his Revelation should be understood, as indeed with what propriety could it be called a Revelation, if it was not intelligible. Where were the value of Faith if it were placed at random? — where the merit of conduct, if action were indiscriminate?

In pursuance, then, of what has been intimated, it is proper to repeat, that Unitarians differ from other Christians, not in their using Reason, or exalting it above Revelation, but in their coming to different conclusions by the exercise of that faculty. 'This is the front and forehead of their offending.' Reason teaches them to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures; the miracles of Christ; his unquestionable authority as the Son of God and Saviour of men; in the reconciliation, or atonement, of men to God through him; in the influences of the Holy Spirit, the immortality of the soul, and future retribution. These they receive and cherish, as their guide in life, their hope in death. These, and other subsidiary doctrines, kindred to them, seem to be as clearly taught in the Scriptures as language allows. They cannot believe in the Trinity, in total depravity, in the popular doctrines of the atonement and of election, because they do not find them in the Bible to believe. Revelation, as well as Reason, disowns them. But they would rather their 'right hand might forget her cunning,' and their 'tongue cleave to the roof of their mouth,' than do any violence to the blessed charter of their privileges and their hopes. They would not for worlds be guilty of perverting one word that fell from the sinless lips of Jesus, or the inspired tongue of the Apostles. They use their own minds in

determining what the book of heaven teaches, because they deeply reverence, not because they 'lightly esteem' that volume. But with Paul, they had rather speak five words with their understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.' They feel that Reason is fallible, therefore they cannot trust another man's, but must hearken to their own. Reason is fallible; therefore they would use it with great care and activity, that it might become more and more trustworthy. Reason is fallible; it may be dimmed by worldliness, or warped by prejudice, or stormed by passion; therefore they cannot dogmatize, for they may be in the wrong, and others in the right. They marvel how others can dogmatize, for *they* may be in the wrong, and themselves in the right. They see no danger in the use of Reason, they see every danger from its neglect and abuse.

Finally, they feel a solemn and awful responsibility, resting upon every individual soul, to decide for itself, according to its best light, what it shall believe and do. The interest here is personal, not social. Human authority is not admissible. Calvin cannot decide, Arminius cannot decide for me; I must decide for myself. God has put it upon me, and I cannot, I dare not, shake off the responsibility. It will not do for the council of Nice, nor the synod of Dort, nor the assembly of Westminster, to step in between me and my master, and determine for me what he taught, and what I must receive. Solemn interests I have at stake. A mighty business is upon my hands, which cannot be done by proxy, though popes and councils should tender their aid. The soul, in such high matters, must do its own work with God's assistance, not with man's interference. My own free mind is worth

more to me in settling the grounds of my duty, and my destiny, than the wisdom of the whole world besides, backed by all its great names, and its vast authority. My conscience, my judgment, my reason — these living principles in my soul, set there by God, kindled by his inspiration, fanned by his Spirit, — these hold me accountable to him with an adamantine strength. If through them I have approved myself to him, my Almighty Father, what are the reproofs of friends, and the slanders of enemies, and the thunders of councils and assemblies? — the mere blast of an adverse wind, the peltings of the outward storm, — they cannot touch the quiet peace of the heart. But — fearful contrast! — if I have from the motives of temporal expediency, from the fear or the favor of man, wrested my conscience, done despite to the good spirit, and embraced a creed, or led a life, which is condemned by that mind God gave me as a governor, wo is me, I am undone, the sweet approval of the heart is gone. 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.'

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FIDELITY IN DUTY,

NOT

ACCURACY IN BELIEF,

OUR

TEST OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

By ANDREW P. PEABODY.

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FIDELITY IN DUTY, &c.

A PLAIN New-York farmer thus illustrated the condition of the religious world, 'When I carry my wheat to Albany to market,' said he, 'my neighbors, some tell me, I must go by this road, others, by that, — some say, that I must go by land, others, that I must take the canal; and they all talk as if every thing depended on my going their way; but, when I get to Albany, they never ask me which way I came, but only whether my wheat is good.' It is with the church on earth, as it was with this honest man's neighbors. Great stress is laid on the way, the merely doctrinal and ritual way, in which men walk to Heaven. Every man is showing some little, narrow, walled in by-path of his own as the only true way. But at the journey's end, I apprehend that the only question will be, whether our wheat is good, — that all the

good wheat, on whatever road it came, will be gathered into the Lord's garner, and the chaff and tares only given over to burning.

This good farmer, whom I have quoted, was a liberal Christian, — and his homely illustration comprises the only creed, the only bond of union of those, who bear the name of liberal Christians. We, to be sure, are called Unitarians; and, so far as a common belief in the undivided unity of God goes, we are Unitarians. But we do not consider this appellation as belonging exclusively to ourselves; for among professed Trinitarians there are very many, whose definitions and explanations of the Trinity amount to a denial of it, while in our own ranks are some, whose doctrinal sentiments are very nearly allied to those of our opponents and denouncers. We do not pretend to any degree of uniformity of faith. We differ widely among ourselves in matters of speculation. We have no party Shibboleth. But we agree in owning good wheat to be good, on whatever road it comes. We agree in making fidelity in duty, not accuracy of belief, our test of the Christian character. And it is on this point chiefly, that we regard ourselves as differing from our fellow-Christians. They lay a stress, which we do not, on creeds and forms. They cannot own the heart to be right, where they think the head wrong.

We, Unitarians, are accused of utter indifference on the subject of faith, — of maintaining that it is no matter what a man believes. This is by no means the case. All truth is sanctifying; and the more correct our faith, the firmer will be our principles of duty. But we regard no particular doctrine or set of doctrines as essential. Yet there is one essential, and that is an honest mind, — a

mind faithful in its search after truth, fearless in following the guidance of reason and inspiration, true to its own convictions. He, who is afraid to investigate, or too indolent to inquire into the deep things of God, or too much the slave of public opinion to receive the dawnings of new light, lacks this great essential; and, even were his creed perfectly sound, he would hold the truth in unrighteousness, and it would be counted to him as error. He, on the other hand, who has honestly used his powers of research and means of knowledge, who has sought the truth to the best of his ability, need not fear that he has embraced any fatal error, but may hope with unwavering confidence for final salvation, if he be only diligent in duty and fervent in spirit.

My object in the present discourse is to show you, that, in judging of our own religious characters, and those of our brethren, the chief stress should be laid, not on modes of faith, but on the frame of heart and the habits of life.

I first remark that, with regard to modes of faith, the Bible and the church are entirely at issue. This church has its five points, that, its thirty-nine articles; — here there is a creed full of dark subtleties, there a covenant, by which a man enters into a contract with his Maker to believe an indigestible mass of the metaphysics of the dark ages. And these standards are made a Procrustes's bed, to which every mind, great or small, must adapt its dimensions, or forego admission to Heaven. But what says the Bible? — A word of all this? By no means. One of the first things, that strikes us on turning over its pages, is the strictly practical character of its requisitions. It is the least technical book in the world. It makes no attempt at giving a system of theology. The longest

creed that it contains is, that Jesus is God's annointed. Its precepts of duty, its motives to holiness occupy the fore-ground, while for doctrinal subtleties recourse must be had to dim and doubtful inference. Its promises are not to the expounders of dark sentences, to those who know all mysteries and have all faith; but to the pure in heart, the poor in spirit, the merciful, the peace-makers, those who do the will of God. Nor among all the warnings against perdition, of which the holy word is full, is honest misbelief once spoken of as one of the shoals, on which we are liable to make a shipwreck of our salvation. Now the Bible is not the faithful chart of the heavenward voyage that it pretends to be, if this shoal lies on the way without being marked down. If honest error could bar a man out of Heaven, I know that God would have told us so, and not left us to find it out for the first time at the judgment seat of Christ.

Another reason for believing that no particular mode of faith can be essential to salvation lies in the very nature of faith. Faith is involuntary. We cannot believe what we will, but only what we see evidence for. We irresistibly yield our assent to the preponderance of argument, and often find ourselves forced to believe what we had rather not find true. I cannot help believing as I do. My neighbor, who denounces my faith, cannot help believing as he does. We have both of us diligently sought for the truth, searched the scriptures, weighed opposing views and arguments, and have in some respects reached opposite results. Our wills have been equally good. We are equally sincere. We have done all we could to believe right. And is it possible that he will be rewarded and I punished eternally, for having involuntarily arrived at

contrary conclusions? This is making our future happiness or misery to depend, not on our holiness or guilt, but on our mere good or ill fortune. If God had designed that our final destiny should turn solely on our skill in interpreting the Bible, that holy book would have been so penned as to leave no room for involuntary and honest error. As it now stands, giving fair ground for different inquiries with equal sincerity to put opposite interpretations upon its records, if the accuracy of a man's interpretations is to fix his fate for eternity, the Bible, so far from being a display of God's mercy, is a cruel gift, a fatal treasure, a tyrant's bribe to ruin. If I cannot be saved without believing that Jesus is equal with God, it was a wanton trifling with my undying soul for Jesus to have said, "'The Father is greater than I." We are told indeed, that there is a double meaning to these words, that they involve an enigma, which the faithful alone can solve. But all the aspects of nature must change, and all the brighter and clearer pages of scripture must be blotted out, before I can believe that the God of Nature and of the Bible has made my salvation turn on the solving of an enigma. If penitence for Adam's sin is an essential part of that godly sorrow, without which we cannot enter Christ's kingdom, it was unspeakably cruel, it was idle mockery of the unwary and confiding reader, for it to have been written in the book of life, 'The son shall not bear the inquity of the father.' Nor is it of any avail to tell us, as some of our brethren of other creeds do, that these things are spiritually discerned, that they are made visible by special divine illumination, and that *they* have within them the testimony of the spirit that their doctrines are true. We would humbly trust that we are not utterly

destitute of spiritual discernment. Nor are we without the strongest inward testimony to what we regard as the truth in Jesus. We find it competent to sustain us in the spirit's most trying emergencies, in bereavement, sickness, and at the gates of death. We find that it can cheer the path of self-denying duty, that it can inspire the prayer of faith, and prompt to the labor of love.

Another consideration, that demonstrates modes of faith to be unessential, is that some of the most beautiful and finished specimens of the christian character are to be found among those, who could not be said to have any distinctive faith on subjects of controversy. I have seen the lone widow, who had eaten all her days the bread of penury, who had been buffeted by all the storms of life,—all its waves and billows had passed over her. Chronic infirmity, palsying age came upon her. She seemed singled out for the keenest shafts of sorrow. Yet the word of God was through life her refuge, and her strong tower. It was never from her side, and always filled her mouth with praise, and her heart with gladness. As she talked of its blessed disclosures, her dim eye would kindle, her wan face would glow, she would forget the elements of discomfort all around her, and speak and feel as if she were God's most favored child. Her ceaseless theme was the goodness of her heavenly Father; her constant cry to those about her, 'Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.' The most exclusive sectarian in the world could not have been in her society without owning that she was a Christian. And she died as she had lived. She fell sweetly asleep in Jesus, with words of triumph on her shrivelled lips, and her withered hands clasped in gratitude for her release

from life's long labor. A halo of celestial light seemed to dwell about her cottage and her deathbed. When with her, you felt that you were in a holier presence, and with one much nearer heaven than the rest of her fellow-pilgrims. Yet she knew nothing of technical theology. She did not know, and could not be made to understand the difference between the divers sects about her. She considered all as Christians, who breathe a Christian spirit; and to her dying day, it was a mystery to her why they all could not extend to each other the sympathy and love, in which she embraced them all. I am very certain that she would not have known the meaning of such words and phrases as *Trinity*, *election*, *vicarious atonement*, *hereditary depravity*, and the like. And certain am I, that she never received or rejected the doctrines which they imply. These questions never occurred to her mind. She could not have understood any of the complex creeds, of which the church is full. Her religion seemed to be comprehended in these few simple axioms: I have a Father in heaven, who is always with me, and whose presence I can always feel, who seems even nearer to me in darkness than in light, — in trouble than in joy: I have a Saviour, who showed his love in suffering and dying for me, who loves me still, and will welcome me to heaven: I have a home reserved for me in my Father's house above, not because I merit it, for I am but a poor sinner, but because he is too good to cast away any that come to him.

Now this is not a solitary case; but the representative of a very large class. I have known scores of such cases, and so has every minister of the gospel. Thousands of such Christians have there been in every section and age

of the church, who have borne on their care-worn brows the bright seal of adoption, whose light has shone in the dark places of penury and distress, who have glorified their Father and their Saviour in the most bitter allotments of want, pain and woe, who have lived and died in the very odor of sanctity and breath of heaven. In the judgment, shall all these holy and humble of heart be turned by, because they cannot say their creeds or understand their catechisms? I know that they will not. I can doubt, and fear, and tremble for myself, and for those, who, like myself, are surrounded by so many secondary supports, aids and comforts, that we may have leaned upon these, when we have seemed to lean upon the Rock of Ages. But for those, to whom life has been as a bare, naked wilderness, with only this one eternal rock for their shelter, or as a wave-tossed ocean, with God's unfailing word for their only beacon light, — for those, who have been stripped of all else, and thrown wholly upon the love and faithfulness of their God, I cannot harbor a doubt. And yet these, the exclusive sectarian, if consistent with himself, must cut off from heaven; for not one of them can say his shibboleth. He cuts off all the poor and ignorant, the weary and heavy laden, the despised and rejected of men, the very souls to whom the gospel is richest in promise, whom Jesus came especially to seek and save.

I would yet farther infer that peculiar modes of faith are unessential from the very nature of the points in controversy. They have no *direct* reference to practice, no necessary bearing upon the heart and conduct. There is a virtual agreement in all, that pertains to the motives, duties and rewards of the Christian life. Persons of op-

posite theories cherish the same practical views, the same sentiments of devotion, the same principles of piety. Thus, for instance, we, Christians, all agree in admitting the fact of human depravity, and the necessity of repentance and regeneration; nor is there the slightest difference among us with regard to the nature, evidence or fruits of regeneration. But we differ about the origin of sin. Some of us believe that we inherit a sinful nature, and are accountable for our first parent's transgressions; others that we are not sinners till we begin to sin, and that we have no one's sins but our own to answer for. But I cannot conceive how this difference can affect feeling or conduct. Were we to believe that the sins, not only of Adam, but of the whole universe, were imputed to us, we yet could repent of no more than we are conscious of, we could be conscious of no more than we had committed, and we are at best conscious of guilt enough to demand a life-long flow of contrite sorrow. — So too, we all agree in regarding heaven as the gift of God's free grace, without any constraining merit on our part, and we look to Jesus as the messenger of God's grace and the author of our salvation. The only difference is about certain preliminary negotiations in the courts of heaven between the Father and the Son, which, some say, were first adjusted, and for which others can find no proof. But on either ground, our obligation to love and gratitude remains the same. On either ground, all is free mercy on heaven's part, all undeserving helplessness and misery on ours. — So with regard to the atonement, we all agree that it is through the benign agency of Jesus, that we are rescued from the evils and woes of sin, and that in the work of our redemption he is the All in all, the First and

the Last. And can it make us one whit more or less grateful to him, to know whether the shaft, which he averted from us, pierced his own side?—So too with regard to the person of Jesus, we all agree in receiving him as the Emmanuel, as the incarnation of the divine attributes; we all look upon his works as God's works, his words as God's words, his spirit as God's spirit. When we contemplate him, it is to all of us as if we saw God face to face. What possible practical effect can flow from our metaphysical notions as to his nature? What difference can it make, whether we regard his divinity as essential and innate, or as derived and indwelling? In this way we might review all the points of controversy, and should be at a loss to understand how any of them could have a decisive bearing upon character, and thus upon salvation.

And when we take a survey of the Christian world, we must look with thoroughly jaundiced eyes, unless we can trace, under every variety of form and creed, those who fear God and work righteousness. When we mentally call over the roll of Christ's elect, the names of Catholics and Protestants, Lutherans and Calvinists, Trinitarians and Unitarians, come up side by side Every sect has given God fervent worshippers, man faithful servants, truth and virtue noble and fearless champions, piety stainless and glowing exemplars. Every sect has had its peace-makers and its martyrs, its holy in life, its resigned in sorrow, its happy and triumphant in death. And we cannot but trust that from each and all God has been making up his jewels, and that the pious sectarian will embrace with rapture at the portals of heaven hosts of his God-serving fellow-pilgrims, whom, less in anger than in sorrow, he had here ignorantly and rashly consigned to

perdition. And if good men are thus to meet in heaven, why cannot they so meet on earth? So long as modes of faith are made the test of character, there can be no union. Let all who do their Father's will be regarded as heirs of the kingdom, then will the church on earth become one family, as are the saints above. Thus may the Catholic, with his pompous ritual, and the Quaker, in his primitive simplicity, thus may he who numbers a hundred articles in his creed, and he who is strong in the simple faith that Jesus is the Christ, thus may men of every nation, clime and tongue, be united in one holy brotherhood. Nor is this brotherhood confined to the church. Jesus has sheep, who are not of his fold. If in any heathen land there be one, who has turned away from fraud and violence, who has done justice and loved mercy, and walked humbly before the God, whom he has heard in the evening breeze, or beheld in the glow of nature, or felt in the deep workings of his own spirit, he has done the will of his Father in heaven, and belongs to the Christian family. If there be a Jew, who, with contrite heart mourns for the desolation of Zion, and prays for the peace of Jerusalem, and serves the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he, too, as a doer of God's will, belongs to the household of the Saviour, whom his brethren set at nought. If faith be the standard, the devout Pagan, the pious Jew are reprobates; but if those who do God's will shall enter his kingdom, they are heirs of that kingdom.

I have as yet taken but a one-sided view of the doctrine before us. I have drawn out the considerations, which it suggests with regard to the unessential moment of

modes of faith or forms of profession. But it proposes a thorough and heart-searching test of fitness for heaven; and to this must I devote the few remaining moments for which I can claim your attention. 'He that doeth the will of my Father, he shall enter the kingdom.' Though I mourn over the prevalence of a sectarian spirit, on account of the bitter fountains of jealousy and unkindness that flow from it, I mourn for it yet more as turning away men's minds from what should be the great and all-absorbing aim of life, — the cultivation of the character. It is still as it was in the Saviour's time, many are inquiring, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' when they should themselves be giving heed to the exhortation, 'Strive to enter in at the straight gate.' Many are anxious about faith, when they should be busy in spiritual culture. Brethren, if you do your Father's will, you shall know of his doctrine. By works shall faith be made perfect. '*Whosoever doeth the will of my Father*,' not outwardly and mechanically, like a spiritless machine, turned and set in motion by some extraneous power; but inwardly, heartily, lovingly. When we propose obedience as the test of character, we mean not external obedience, *mere morality*, as it is sometimes sneeringly called; but obedience in all their depth, compass and spirituality to those two great laws of the inner man, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.' This do, and thou shalt live; yea, live, though the outward form of godliness under which thou wert nurtured be utterly blasted, though thy creed perish in the day of trial, though thy speculations vanish into thin air before the first rays of eternity's light. Thou shalt live, because thou hast life in thyself, — the life of

God within thee, his breath in thy soul, his spirit in thy heart.

I cannot but apprehend, that we, Unitarians, should peculiarly take home to ourselves the warning to be doers of our heavenly Father's will, instead of merely saying, Lord, Lord. We are too apt to glory in our freedom from antiquated error and our simple and accurate views of truth, without remembering how much these things enhance our responsibilities. Brethren, if we have a purer faith, we are bound to show it by our works, by a brighter piety and a more comprehensive charity. Where much is given, much will be required; and, if our hearts and lives are none the better for our belief, the correctness of our creed will only aggravate our guilt, and make our condemnation greater. Here lies our great danger. Every thing seems plain and easy. Mists are brushed away, metaphysical subtleties put to flight. He that runneth may read. The way is so plain that 'the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.' We can see all along the straight path to heaven. As we stand at its entrance, we can trace every step till it loses itself in the celestial city. But the path that lies so plain before us, and is open night and day, we feel that we can enter upon at any time, and are too apt to postpone it to the last moment, when the mists of age or death so becloud our sight, that we stumble even on a smooth way, and wander from a straight road. Be it not so with us, brethren. Let us not stand, like senseless guide-boards, pointing the way we will not tread. But let us show that ours is a doctrine according to godliness, by bringing forth most abundantly the fruits of a godly life.

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THE

UNITARIAN REFORM.

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THE UNITARIAN REFORM.

We propose, in this tract, to consider THE UNITARIAN REFORM. What is the nature of the Unitarian movement? What does it propose? What are its aims?

To answer this question, it is necessary for us to look back as far as the Reformation of Luther. The great principles of the Reformation, which inspired the lion-hearted Reformer and his colleagues with courage to oppose the vast and ancient authority of Rome, and which they bore as standards before them in the conflict, were two — THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE; and again, EACH MAN MUST INTERPRET THE BIBLE FOR HIMSELF. These were the two broad principles which they opposed to the Romish doctrine that *Tradition as well as the Bible, was a rule of Faith*, and that *the Church was the rightful interpreter of the meaning of Scripture.*

But broadly as the early Reformers proclaimed these principles, they had not the faith or courage to adhere to them in practice. Perhaps it would have been asking too much of them, to require that the discoverers of such vast principles should also be able to apply them to their minutest consequences.

Perhaps, too, the creeds and confessions of faith which the Reformers drew up, were not intended by them to be arbitrarily imposed on their churches, as a substitute for free enquiry into God's word, but rather as an expression of those views in which they were all cordially united. But the mischief followed. The creeds which were a mere expression of a common sentiment at first, became soon the established and authoritative codes to which all intellects must bow. Soon it came to pass that those who differed from the creed, though they should be led from it by the Bible, were regarded as heretics. And thus the same human authority which avowedly explained the Scripture in the Romish church, began to lord it over God's heritage in the Protestant. The Bible ceased to be the rule of faith and practice. The Augsburg Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Catechism, the Cambridge and Saybrook Platforms, took its place in Germany, England and America.

The evil results, which in due time, have every where followed and still attend, this substitution of human doctrines, human commandments, human authority, for that of God, are what might have been anticipated. A false principle of conduct, however expedient or politic it may seem, is sure to bring after it, by and by, evil consequences.

So here, men who found themselves prevented from searching Scripture except they should be sure to find there the very doctrine of their creeds, soon gave up searching the Scripture at all. Theological science stands still. If you venture to teach a doctrine in any language but that of the Confession, you are denounced as a heretic. "For this cause, many sleep." The human mind loses all its energy, when it enters these enchanted domains of theology. The theological literature of Great Britain, for example, how puny and dwarfed is it, compared with its political, dramatic, poetic literature. The reason is obvious. The human intellect achieves no triumphs while it works in fetters.

But a worse consequence than this follows. It was a hearty spontaneous faith which the first Reformers placed in their symbols. They satisfied fully the want of *their* minds. But no human work, nor any human words, can feed and nourish successive generations. Each generation looks with different feelings and through a different culture at the great truths of Heaven and Earth. They need a new language to express their faith. The old words do not satisfy them. It is a proof of the divinity that resides in the Bible, that this book *does* continue to satisfy successive generations for thousands of years. But so can no human composition. In consequence, when men are compelled, by fear of denunciation, to speak their grandfathers' language instead of their own, their words seem empty to themselves. They do not really express the inmost belief of their hearts. So they become false, faithless, hypocritical, professing in words what nothing in their heart corresponds to. Secret

unbelief couched under a hypocritical profession is the second great evil resulting from the authority of creeds.

And the last, is open unbelief — not merely of the Church creed, but of that which it conceals; the great truths of religion itself. When the time has arrived, in which the church formulas and standards are no longer suited to the intellect and culture of the age; the intellect, in breaking away from them, breaks away from Christianity itself. "These are the representatives of Christianity, and these are evidently absurd, contradictory and illogical, we will have none of them." So they reason, confounding God's religion with man's theology, the everlasting truths of Christianity with human systems and doctrines, and rejecting the whole together.

In view of these evils, resulting from the imposition of human systems upon the mind, the Unitarians have been led to oppose all such imposition. They say — "Let us read the Bible for ourselves, and form our own system, if any system be necessary. Jesus Christ taught no formal system — the Apostles laid down no fixed standard of opinions — they taught the truth in a free, living manner, without any scheme or plan of theology at all. Why cannot it be so now? It *can* be so. We will not go to John Calvin, or to the Westminster Assembly, to know what to believe; we will go at once to Jesus Christ, and his Apostles. This is our right. This right we claim. We reject your doctrines. We will not receive your systems. We believe in Christ, and in the great truths he taught. We believe in repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You have no right to add to this Christian confession. We will stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

The first great object then of the Unitarian Reform is *Christian Liberty.* We demand this, in its broadest sense. We do not ask for liberty to modify your creeds a little, to believe a little less about Predestination, or a little more about Ability, but we ask for liberty not to believe in your creeds at all. We wish to set them all aside, and read the Bible with our own eyes, and use our own language in speaking of it. We would be wholly free from these scholastic trammels. We demand to be acknowledged as Christians, so long as we believe in Jesus Christ, and show an earnest love for him in our lives; whether we believe or not in *vicarious atonement*, the *trinity*, *original sin*, and other such unscriptural shibboleths.

It is evident then that Unitarians are in the advanced rank, the forlorn hope of those who contend for christian liberty. They place themselves on the original principles of the Reformation, and demand the full liberty which these principles guarantee. If Unitarians succeed in obtaining this liberty, we say not that Christian freedom is secure, but that the greatest step has been taken *towards* securing it, since the times of the first reformers. If Unitarians succeed in obtaining toleration, then the tyranny of human systems, at least, is at an end.

And then there will be some hope of Christian Union, that long desired, long prayed for, but almost despaired of blessing. The evils of the present state of disunion in the Christian church are so obvious that all see them and lament them — the difficulty is that very few perceive their true remedy. In every city of our land, in every small town there are Christians — but in what condition?

Banded together, united as with one heart and soul, acting in united power to convert the world to God? Alas! no — but split into half a dozen parties, having little sympathy for each other, jealous of each others' success, and instead of carrying the war into the camp of sin, contending with each other about its origin, instead of laboring to bring back a sinful world to God, arguing about the theory of conversion. The evils of this state, all, in their cooler moments, lament. But the only remedy they propose is, that all other sects should come over and join their own. "Let all men agree to the primitive order of church government, and join the only authentic church," say the Episcopalians, "and all will be well." "Let all obey God, and be immersed," say the Baptists, "and there will be no division." In other words — "Let others think as we do, and we shall be united." Others again, wishing to unite the credit of orthodoxy with the advantages of liberality, exhaust their wits in constructing new creeds, which shall contain the essence of the old in a more modern and loose dress.

The Unitarians take a different way. They do, what few others have yet done; they go to the Scriptures for the test of Christian fellowship. They find it there written that to believe Jesus to be the Christ is the only fundamental faith, to confess him openly before men, the only essential act.*

Standing on this broad platform they proclaim that we should unite in Christian communion and fellowship with all who acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ, and openly

* See, for instance, Rom. x. 9, illustrated by Acts viii. 37, 38, xvi. 31, 33.

claim to be his disciples, if their lives are sober and decent. And a sound *Christian Union* can never come except from this acknowledgment of *Christian Liberty*. In laboring then for Christian Liberty, the Unitarians are laying the only true foundation for Christian Union.

Another object of the Unitarian Reform, by many thought to be the chief object, but by us held to be secondary, regards religious opinions. Casting away the trammels of theological systems and reading the Scriptures by their own light, many things in the popular theology seem to them erroneous. These relate to the character of God, of Christ, that of man, and that of true religion.

According to the popular theories, the character of God is such, that he can never pardon the sinner till a full satisfaction is made to Him in the punishment of some victim. This simple statement, according to all human analogy, entirely excludes the attribute of mercy from the character of God. For what mercy is there in pardoning after the full punishment is inflicted — what clemency in remitting the debt after it is paid! But again, the popular theology declares that the Deity was satisfied by this punishments' falling on an innocent being. This statement, again, excludes the attribute of justice. For where is the justice of punishing the innocent for the guilty. The Bible says "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die — the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Ezek. xviii. 20.) But the popular theology undertakes to *impute* righteousness to the wicked, and wickedness to the righteous. All this

clouds the character of God. Add to this the doctrines of Decrees and Election, as commonly set forth, and the darkness is complete. We have a being whose law is to do his own *will*, not because it is holy, just and good, but because it is his *will*, and because being sovereign he *can* do it. And yet again, in order to excite fear, which always seems a more powerful principle than love to the heart not thoroughly Christianized — to excite fear, God is set forth as surrounded by the terrors of the Old Testament, instead of being regarded through his image in the New. He is represented as full of wrath against the sinner, while Christ every where teaches that he is full of love toward him.* Just as far as this theology is believed, just so far is the character of God perverted from the real evangelical view. Just so far, God is made a vindictive, self-willed, arbitrary, and passionate being. We tremble while we write these words, but they are drawn from us by the deepest and clearest conviction that the unneutralized influence of the common theology would thus degrade our ideas of the Almighty. Thank God, it always *is* neutralized — by the common sense and common reason of mankind, and by the perpetual influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While the New Testament remains in the hands of the people, no false theology can wholly obscure the face of our Heavenly Father. But so much of harm results from these opinions, that the Unitarians are well authorized to wage war against them.

The Unitarian Reform affects also, as is well known, the theory of God's metaphysical existence. The doc-

* See Matt v. 44, 45. Luke xv. throughout.

trine of the Trinity, which seems sedulously to avoid all Scripture phraseology, which is expressed in dark metaphysical language, and shrouds itself in mystery, appears to Unitarians, wholly unsupported by Scripture. No where in the Bible is it taught, or pretended to be taught, in plain terms.* A doctrine, professing to be among the most important and essential of Christian truths, yet left by Christ and his Apostles to be inferred from texts taken here and there—proved piecemeal, and then the pieces fastened together in the dark.

The surest way however of meeting the Trinitarian is simply to ask him what he believes. "Tell me what your doctrine is, and then I will tell you whether I believe it or not." If he then says it is a mystery, and that he believes in a mysterious three-fold distinction in the divine nature, which he cannot comprehend, you may tell him that you too believe in a thousand mysteries relating to the Deity, and that when those mysteries are revealed some one of them will very probably turn out to be the same as his. But if he proceeds to explain his faith, he will inevitably fall into Tritheism, and believe in three distinct Gods, having a unity of purpose and will, or into Sabellianism and believe in one God with a three-fold manifestation of himself, as Father, Son and Spirit. To the first explanation you may oppose the whole Bible, to the last you need oppose nothing, for it is Unitarianism.

With respect to the person of Christ, we have published so much elsewhere, that we need say little here. The

* The passage 1 John v. 7, no intelligent scholar would now rely upon.

Unitarians take from him a physical glory to give him a moral glory. He is divine to them, not as possessing the physical attributes of Eternity and Infinity, but as being the chosen one to reflect to the universe, as from a mirror, God's moral character. He is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person—he who has seen him has seen the Father, for he is the representative of God in the world. He is the manifestation of the divine holiness, mercy, love. In his life of tender sympathy with man he images the divine long-suffering. In his death, that great symbol of reconciliation, he has not only taught, but shown, in a way that has stamped conviction on the hearts of thousands, the love of God to his sinful child. This is Christ's true divinity. We take away his metaphysical honors that we may heighten his spiritual glory.

The views of man, given by the creeds, Calvinistic or sub-Calvinistic, are equally one-sided and erroneous in the judgment of Unitarians. The object of the makers of these creeds, was to produce a deep conviction of sinfulness in the human heart, to overthrow all pride of goodness, and bring the sinner to an humble confession of his guilt. This was a worthy and Christian object, but to attain this end they ran into exaggeration and extremes. They exaggerated human sinfulness, when they made it *total*. When they declare that in man there is no good, they run into an extreme equally unphilosophic and unchristian. It makes the word of God of no effect, for if there be nothing in man unperverted, if reason and conscience are blinded, then you might as well preach the Gospel to a block or a stone as to a man. Until his

mind is miraculously changed in all its faculties, he cannot understand or appreciate a word you say. It seems to us also that this doctrine of total depravity runs counter to one of the most important of all Christian truths. While to humble us, we are taught the great extent of our sin and peril, and that without Divine help we cannot extricate ourselves from our evil condition—we are also, to encourage us, taught to believe that in every man there is a struggling principle of truth and goodness. There is a "spirit willing," while "the flesh is weak." There is a "law of the mind" battling against the "law of the members." The faith that in the worst of men lay hidden and buried a divine spark, to be kindled by love and truth; this faith, under one and another name, has been the strength of every Christian Philanthropist. Sometimes, as with the Quaker, it is the inward light of God's spirit "which lighteus every man who cometh into this world." Sometimes, as with the Wesleyans, it is a special influence which attends the word and softens and breaks down the rebellious heart. But in some shape or other, this faith is essential to all hearty efforts for the conversion of man. How can we love sinners, except we believe that there is asleep, under their sin, a spirit of goodness which may be roused at last by our appeals and overcome by our love? This faith is opposed wholly to the doctrine of the total depravity of men, and therefore the Unitarians reject this latter doctrine.

They reject also those popular views of religion which make it consist either in a cold and barren belief, or a series of vague religious emotions. The great scriptural doctrine of justification by faith has been perverted to

mean that a man's salvation is gained by a blind assent to, and a loud profession of orthodox opinions. On the other hand many place their confidence in having experienced certain religious emotions, or in being zealous in the merely religious duties. With Unitarians, on the contrary, religion is taught to be a life, the only sure evidence of which is a daily obedience to God's whole law, a bringing forth the fruits of the spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. For this they have often been accused of teaching mere morality, and seeking salvation by their works. But none of their writers can be accused of recommending a merely worldly morality, or any works of which faith is not the basis. But while it is their firm conviction that all true goodness must flow from inward piety, they are equally clear that much of hypocrisy, worldliness and consequent infidelity has sprung from separating religion from morality — they see clearly that so did not Christ or his Apostles, that the most daily and homely duties were the object of their constant care— that many of their discourses would be called "mere morality" by the Pharisees of the present day — and seeing all this they find it a light thing to be judged by man's judgment.

We will not deny, for our object is not to make a one-sided statement, that many Unitarians may have fallen into the extreme of dwelling too exclusively on our duties to man and to ourselves, without sufficiently basing them on the deep foundation of religious faith. So one extreme produces another. But there is nothing in Unitarianism to countenance or perpetuate this error. No

creeds bind her to it. Accordingly it has already been generally seen; and the Unitarians of the present day, we think, preach more to the deep religious principles in the conscience and heart than those of a former age.

This is the nature, these the objects of the Unitarian Reform. They are so extensive and vast, that the opposition to them is very great, and their advocates find themselves everywhere misrepresented and denounced. But we look upon them as objects for which we count it well to bear reproach. Ought there not to be one party in the church to contend for these great principles? By our position we are forced to be the champions of Christian Liberty, by our interests we are driven to demand Christian Union upon its only rightful ground, and by our convictions we are led to oppose representations of God, man, and religion, which are corroding the heart of Christianity. Though few, let us not shrink or tremble, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Ours is the religion of the future, the religion of progress, the religion for the people. We must increase, they decrease. For truth is mighty, and before its invisible but all-pervading force the power of Popes, and Princes, of Synods and Assemblies, of ancient creeds and long revered dogmas, of prejudices, bigotry and superstition, must go down. With firm faith in the future triumph of our principles, in deep dependence on the mighty arm of Heaven, and in a strenuous endeavor to live as we profess, we can wait the hour when the truth of our principles will be understood and acknowledged.

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TRUTHS JOINED BY GOD

NOT TO BE

SUNDERED BY MAN.

By SAMUEL OSGOOD.

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TRUTHS JOINED BY GOD

NOT TO BE

SUNDERED BY MAN.

When the Pharisees sought to perplex our Lord by questions concerning the subject of divorce, he replied to them — "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." These words have ever since been used in urging the sanctity of the marriage-bond. It is not our purpose to urge this sanctity or to rebuke those, who, by infidel doctrines or scandalous words, seek to put asunder those, whom God hath joined together. We speak not of those, who would destroy the harmony of human families, but of those, who put discord between those doctrines and principles, which God hath joined in sacred union.

It has been the great fault of theologians and Christian sects (without a single exception,) that they have generally given their minds to some one part of divine truth, and forgetting or leaving out of sight other and equally important parts of the truth, have thus sundered what God hath joined. We may see this tendency, whether

we consider the prevalent views of the nature and evidences of christianity, or the nature of man, or of the attributes of God.

I. We first consider the prevalent views of the nature and evidences of religion.

1. God hath joined together Reason and Revelation. Man hath sought to put them asunder. On the one hand, large numbers are crying out against the employment of reason in matters of religion, in order to give the greater importance to revelation. These do not consider, that without reason, revelation cannot be understood, that revelation is addressed to the human mind, and we are commanded to understand what we read, and to be able to render a reason for the hope, that is in us; they forget, that God breathed a spirit into man and by his inspiration giveth him understanding, and that human reason is a ray from that Eternal Mind, from which the light of revelation emanated. In decrying reason in order to glorify revelation, they err, it has well been said, as he would err, who should put out his own eyes in order to show how much he valued the gift of the telescope.

On the other hand, there are not a few who are so jealous, lest reason shall be undervalued, that they deny revelation; altogether unaware how faint a ray is unaided human wisdom; unaware that many of the truths, which they profess to hold by the deductions of the understanding, came originally from revelation; unaware, that he who most honors revelation, at the same time most honors reason also, for he confesses his own affinity with the Divine Mind, sees reason perfected in revelation, and acknowledges joyfully in God's Word the mid-day splen-

dor of that sun, whose faint twilight beam lighteth every man, that cometh into the world."

Away then with the error, that seeks to array revelation against reason or reason against revelation. Reason *and* revelation say we. Reason perfected in revelation, and revelation confirmed and applied by reason. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

2. The works and the spirit! God has given us in proof of our religion, the evidence of miracles, and the evidence of truth: such truth as bears within itself to a right mind, the evidence of its own divinity. Many put discord between the works and the spirit, and mar their divine harmony.

Some dwell almost exclusively upon the evidence of miracles, and underrate the power of the life and truth of Jesus to make their own way to the head and heart. They seem to declare, that there are no sure principles to be believed, except such as have the evidence of supernatural deeds in their behalf. They disparage the inner light—the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. They forget that there is a spirit in man.

Others disparage miracles, declare the word of God to be its own best and only evidence, and care little or nothing for the works, and even seek to explain them away. Time does not allow us to go into a logical examination of the fallacy of their reasoning. It is enough to know, that we have the faithful record of the Savior's miraculous works, and that the human mind is so constituted, as to own in deeds above the power of man, the hand of God and the proof of those assertions in behalf of which the deeds are performed. It is enough to know, that although

we cannot logically define the limit of human power over nature, yet we cannot for a moment believe in Christ's wonderful works, without owning him for Heaven's delegated Messiah. The word and the works! Sunder them not, for God hath joined them, and man needs them both. The inner light does not shine brightly enough on the word to dispense with the aid given to the senses by the works of Christ. The works of Christ on the other hand have no meaning, apart from the word. Indeed they cannot be severed. The words and life of Christ are as closely joined to his works, as soul is joined to body. The works are the best illustrations of his words and life. The love that he preached, was uttered with a power more than of words, at the beds of the sick and dying, and on the cross—the eternal life that he taught in synagogue and market-place, was taught with a new authority by the grave of Lazarus, from the sepulchre in the garden, and from the mount of the Ascension. What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

3. Understanding and Feeling! God hath joined these together. He hath given to man head and heart, intellect and affections: and he is himself Supreme Wisdom and Infinite Love. Yet some seek to separate the two.

Some think of nothing in religion, but warm feeling, and care nothing for argument — nothing for satisfying the understanding: they are always aiming at excitement, and have little idea that any religion is true, which is not shown in groans, and raptures, and noise. They forget, that we are commanded to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves — that the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable. They forget, that the Lord was not in

the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor the fire, but that it was the still small voice, at which the prophet veiled his face in his mantle and owned the present God.

Others there are, on the contrary, who, disgusted with the madness of religious excitements, rush into the opposite extreme, and place religion entirely in the cool understanding; and shrink from all excitement of the feelings upon religious subjects. This is the error of many who call themselves liberal Christians, and very likely, reader, it is your error. There are many happy signs in our churches, that this delusion is passing away.

Away with it! and also the other extreme. Let us have understanding and feeling also. Let not our religion be like the northern lights, or the cold moonbeam — light without warmth; nor let it be like a smouldering coal-pit, hot and dark. Let it be the real sunshine of the soul, light and warm — the beams of the Eternal Sun of Righteousness. The true man — the only real man, unites understanding and feeling — a head clear and able to see his way, and discern the reasons of his faith — a heart warm and living, not ashamed to glow with enthusiasm for truth and virtue, not ashamed to offer the incense of devout praise and prayer to the source of all good. Understanding *and* feeling. What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

4. Faith and works! God hath joined these together. Yet man has profanely sought to separate them — sometimes in practice, although oftener in theory.

Some say, that Faith alone is saving, and they sneer at good works. Others care only for good works and despise faith. They cannot be separated. If a man have a

living faith in God and Christ, he will of course show it in his works. He cannot really and spiritually believe in God and Christ, except he in some degree share their perfections, their holiness and love; and surely, just so far as he shares their holiness and love, he will show it in his daily life, since life is but the utterance of the real character and the outward man is but a transcript of the inward. Faith without works is dead — or is no faith at all.

On the other hand, the man, who loves good works cannot dispense with faith. Never was a good deed done without faith. He, who does a good deed must act from good motives, and he who acts from good motives, must believe in goodness; and a single good motive if consistently argued upon, is foundation enough on which to rear the whole superstructure of Christian Faith. How can a man believe in goodness without believing in the God of all goodness? and how can a man believe in the God of all goodness, without owning the Divine Image in his Son, and how can a man own the Divinity in Jesus Christ, without trusting in the eternal life? Faith *and* works, say the scriptures, and such let our creed be. The hearts' faith, prompting to good works, and good works, giving back the blessing and strengthening faith in turn. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

5. So with religion and morality. God has joined them together. They differ only in form. True religion, or a just sense of our obligation to God, will of course prompt the soul to discharge its duties toward its neighbor and the world. True morality implies the religious spirit. Actions that are merely formal and outside ceremonies,

or done in mere fear of man or the law, do not constitute morality, but at best only legality. True morality comes from the heart, from right affection and a sense of duty; and such morality is always, and must in its very nature be religious. A good deed never was, and never can be performed, that was not a religious deed. Every deed of benevolence is religious, for it draws the soul near to the God of infinite love. Every deed of conscientious duty is religious, for the voice of conscience speaks with divine authority, and he who follows it, owns God in reality, and cannot long refrain from owning him in name. If it be true that no man can love God, whom he hath not seen, unless he love his brother whom he hath seen, it is also true, that he who truly loveth his brother will also love the God and Father of all. Religion and morality! be this our creed. Pure religion and undefiled, visiting the widow and fatherless in their affliction, and keeping the heart unspotted from the world. Religion prompting to morality, and morality inspired by and strengthening religion. What God hath joined let not man put asunder.

II. The same spirit, that has put such discord into the opinions of mankind concerning the essence and evidence of religion, has also shown itself in the prevalent views of Human Nature.

1. The Scriptures as well as observation and conscience declare the general depravity of mankind, and at the same time declare his moral capacity for better things. But theologians have separated the two views.

Some, and the greater part, have insisted upon man's utter depravity, and his total inability to the least goodness. If this doctrine be true, then man need no more concern himself with self-improvement, than a stock or a

stone. It is indeed true, that all goodness is of God, but it is none the less true on this account, that if God has not granted to man the ability to strive for his own improvement, and to partake more and more of his spirit, it is then idle to strive to do any thing for our own salvation. If we are not beings with moral and spiritual capacities, then is preaching as vain as if addressed to the dead walls.

Others there are who go into the opposite extreme, and losing sight of man's depravity, speak only of his capacity for goodness. Many preachers have spoken in tones more fitted for the ears of angels, than weak and sinful men.

Christianity unites the two views. It speaks of man's sinfulness, even his depravity, and yet calls on him to repent. The true believer owns his weakness and imperfection, but trusts, that he has a spirit within him which with God's aid, may bring forth the good fruits of peace, and hope, and love.

2. The same principle that does away the discord between man's depravity and his moral capacity, also reconciles the conflicting opinions regarding man's free-agency and yet his dependence upon God. God has joined the two truths—our dependence on him, and our own free will and accountability. Man has separated them.

Some have denied man's free agency, and either on the one hand, made the eternal happiness and eternal misery of mankind depend on the arbitrary election of God, or else have declared, that all will be ushered after death into endless joy, no matter what their lives on earth may have been.

Others have so much dwelt on man's free agency, as entirely to lose sight of our dependence on God. The scriptures unite both views, the need of God's spirit, yet our ability to strive for ourselves, and partake more and more of this spirit. Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto thee. God will give his spirit without measure : but it is to those that ask him, or comply with the divinely appointed means for obtaining the blessing. Work out your own salvation : yet believe, that it is God that worketh in you. Believe, that of your own self you can do nothing ; yet, remember also, that at the judgment seat of Christ we must all appear, and be judged according to the deeds done in the body. We depend on God, and yet we are free and accountable. What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

3. Man hath a spiritual nature, yet he needs a Savior. These two truths are one, yet they have been severed.

Some have spoken of man's spiritual power in such terms as to imply little need of salvation by Christ.

Others have spoken so of the need of salvation, as to make it entirely a miraculous gift, and destroy belief in those spiritual faculties, which the Saviour came to quicken.

God hath joined the two truths. The spirit in man, and yet the need of a ministry of salvation, that shall quicken the dormant spirit. The mind of man, unaided, cannot attain true peace—cannot be saved from the evils of this world, nor firmly established in faith in the eternal life. The evils of existence press heavily on the heart and unless the divine comforter be there, evil will often

seem to reign over good. The soul needs trust in one, who like Jesus, has sounded the depths of human woes, and by his own experience proved there is a glorious joy beyond; one, who has passed through the gloomiest recesses of this vale of tears, and seen that beyond this darkness there is glorious light,—that even the Gethsemane of agony can have its ministering angels, and the cross of anguish can lead to a heavenly crown. The natural creation gives the soul some intimations of an eternal life, and the soul's own yearnings and aspirations crave an immortality, but creation often speaks a language of enigma, and the soul's consciousness is wavering and uncertain, and often the clouds of sin and despondency shut down upon it, and hide the stars of immortal hope. In Christ immortality is made sure: he never doubted it while living, and sealed its truth by his death and resurrection: he hath passed within the veil: the curtain before the Holy of Holies is rent asunder: man may now enter the sanctuary of divine truth, may behold the ark of the eternal covenant between the human soul and eternal Father, and without priest or new sacrifice may find a blissful reconciliation or atonement. By faith in Christ, salvation comes. Yet to the spirit in man the word of salvation is addressed. What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

III. Let us now turn and consider for a moment some of the errors which men have run into by taking one-sided views of the attributes of God.

1. God is our Creator and Preserver, and the world's Creator and Preserver, and at the same time he is a personal being, and distinct from man and the world. Such

is the doctrine of scripture, and such the feeling of the pious heart and the conviction of the common sense. But many have taken such views as to see only one side of this truth.

Some so speak of God as to remove him in imagination from man and the world. They look upon creation as a self-moving machine, acting by self-directing general laws. They disregard the declaration of scripture, that God is all in all, and that in him we live and move and have our being. They banish our Heavenly Father from earth and his earthly children to some distant and unknown throne.

Others, on the contrary, so speak of God's presence in the world and in the human soul, as to confound him with the world and man, and to deny virtually his personal existence. The vulgar infidel believes in no God but nature, and rests his faith upon the Pantheism of the materialist. The mystic dreamer, while he soars above grovelling materialism, has often rested in man's spiritual nature, and owned no God, but the spirit in man.

The Christian avoids both errors. He takes revelation and the oracles of his own soul for his guide, and believes neither in Pantheism, whether of materialism or spiritualism; and also avoids the soul chilling faith, that would banish the Almighty from creation and the human soul. He looks upon the Almighty as the Heavenly Father, present indeed, and active in all things, and yet a Being not to be confounded with nature. What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

2. God is good, and yet there is evil in the world. Man has tried to sever these two truths.

Because there is evil in the world, men have denied the love, and sometimes the very being, of God. Others, because God is good, have denied the existence of evil.

Both exist. Every one has felt pain of body and anguish of mind; and yet every one may see God's being and love manifested in the works of creation, in the frame and mind of man, and in the divine word. Every one has seen, that often from apparent evil God educes good, and we may all hope that the revelations of the spiritual world will clear up the mystery, and show more fully, than we can now see, the divine love, shown even in the ills of the world.

3. Again God's omniscience and omnipotence are declared in scripture; and also man's freedom and accountability. Man hath sought to take them apart.

Some dwell so entirely upon God's omniscience and omnipotence, as to forget that he has entrusted them with any power, and to sink into fatalism, and make God the author of sin. Others dwell so entirely on man's freedom and accountability as to forget God's supreme knowledge and power. Now it is surely above the ken of human reason to explain how the two are compatible with each other, — to explain merely how it is that God surely foreknows all that man is to do, and yet that man is free. Yet the two views are by no means contradictory. It is above human reason to explain their compatibility. Yet their compatibility is by no means against human reason. It is not an absurdity, but merely an incomprehensibility, just as the idea of infinite space or infinite time is incomprehensbile, yet so far from being absurd, that the mind cannot help believing it.

The scriptures declare God's foreknowledge and supreme power, and reason confirms their declaration. The scriptures and common feeling proclaim man's free agency. We take both truths, and would hope to understand their union better, when the veil of this earthly tabernacle shall be removed, and no longer seeing through a glass darkly, we shall see face to face.

4. Again. God is just, and yet he is loving and merciful. These two attributes of his character are harmonious, yet they have been looked upon as discordant.

Many so speak of his justice, as to forget his love, and to doom to his eternal hate a large, if not the largest, portion of his human creatures. Others so urge his love as to hide his justice, and keep out of sight the retributions of his law. The bible and conscience unite the two. God is love, yet he is just. He loves all, and yet the transgressor shall not go unpunished. Even in his love he shows his justice, and in his justice manifests his love, by proving his regard for that pure law, which is established for the good of all. Even in his chastenings, he is still the heavenly parent, and as a father chasteneth his children, so the Lord chasteneth them whom he loveth. Justice and mercy, be this our creed. I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.

5. God is One, yet has manifested himself in various ways. Unity of being is perfectly consistent with variety of manifestation.

Yet some have so spoken of the unity of God, as to forget or to slight those manifestations of him, which are most impressive to the human heart. They have trusted indeed in one God, the Father, but have not sufficiently

remembered that God was in Christ, and by the Holy Spirit ever giveth witness of himself in the faithful soul.

Others, on the contrary, have so regarded the variety of divine manifestation, as virtually to deny the unity of God, and to assert a practical tritheism.

The true Christian avoids both errors. He believes in one God, even the Father, and rejoices that he has manifested himself in the Son and by the Holy Spirit. Many signs of the times, alike in the orthodox and dissenting churches indicate, that this will become the predominant view, that the controversy about unity and trinity will be brought to rest, that both sides of the truth will be recognised, and thus what God hath joined be no longer put asunder.

Let us never be of the number of those, who thus see only one part of the truth, and who quarrel with all who think differently from themselves. It is very easy, indeed, it requires little sense, and still less good feeling, for a man to take up some fragment of the truth, and to say, "here it is, I have found the truth, all who do not acknowledge this to be the whole truth, are heretics and children of perdition." And it is very easy for another man to take up another fragment and to do the same things in turn. But it would be far better for all to put their fragments together, and try to build up the entire edifice upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom the whole building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

It is written, that in the days of chivalry, when mail-

clad knights went forth in quest of adventures, two knights drew near each other at a place, where a beautiful shield was hung on the branch of a tree. The two warriors arrived at the same time on opposite sides of the shield, and courteously saluted each other, and entered into conversation.

"What a beautiful shield!" said the first.

"How it gleams in the sunshine!" said the second.

"How bright the silver is," said the first.

"Silver!" said the other, "it is gold. Do you mean to jest?"

"I mean to say, the shield is silver," said the first, "do you intend to contradict me?"

"You lie, Sir Knight!" said the second. "The shield is gold, and I will prove it to be such upon your false head."

"Come on," said the other, "and let us see, whether the God of battles will take the liar's part."

And so the two knights put their lances in rest, and were rushing at each other; when an old man with hoary head and placid brow, came out of the wood, and put himself between the combatants.

"My children!" said he, "How is this? were you not just now friends? Whence then these angry looks?"

"He gave me the lie," said the first knight, "he says this shield is gold."

"He lies," said the second, "he declared the shield to be silver. Look, reverend father, and judge between us two."

The old man drew near, and looking on one side found silver there, and on the other side and found it gold.

"Children!" said he, "you are both right and both

wrong. The shield is both silver *and* gold. Always look at both sides, before you judge a matter."

The two knights, abashed, put up their arms, and forgot their animosities, as they clasped hand in hand.

Would Christians learn the moral of this story, many an angry word and perplexed feeling would be spared. And need they wait for a mediator? the Saviour is such a mediator. In him all parts of the truth are joined in harmonious union.

In his word and his life, all the truths of religion whether relating to its nature and evidence, or to man, or God, or salvation, are fully and harmoniously revealed.

The principles of holy truth, between which man has put so much discord, have been ever joined in the Divine Mind, and are jointly revealed in the divine word. They are as the band of twin seraphim circling the throne of the Eternal, and singing endless praises to His name. Seek not to mar their sacred union. What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

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ON

THE ATONEMENT.

By EDWARD B. HALL.

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ON

THE ATONEMENT.

All men are sinners. The word of God declares this unequivocally and most solemnly. Universal observation confirms it. Human nature shows it in all ages and all circumstances. Every conscience attests it, or if it do not, it is because of its own deadness or perversion. Every man must feel that he has transgressed the laws of God, and if iniquity were strictly marked against him, he must be condemned. He needs forgiveness. The mercy of God is his only reliance. How is that mercy to be obtained? The question has been anxiously asked in all ages; and reason and nature, superstition and philosophy, have been tasked in vain for an answer. It is a question which Revelation alone can definitely answer. It has answered it. And our present inquiry is, — what is its answer? *What are the conditions of forgiveness?*

It is impossible to come to this inquiry without seriousness and solicitude. It is old and familiar, but that does not lessen its solemnity. Men have been bold in meet-

ing and pursuing it, daring in their curiosity, loud in their assertions, at variance in their decisions. They have pronounced the subject all a mystery, and they have talked of it as if it were all known to them. They have lodged it among the hidden counsels of the Almighty, and they have gone behind those counsels and rehearsed the conversations and contracts to which it led, from all eternity. They have forbidden reason to tamper with it, and yet let loose their own wild and hurtful speculations. They have declared that nature gives no intimation of it, and afterward have sought and found it in every human government, and the common relations and offices of life. So of scripture, while they have admitted that its teachings on this subject were highly figurative language, they have given or allowed to that language, the most literal construction. While they have insisted that nothing but wilfulness and guilt could mistake its meaning, no two churches, no two creeds, scarcely two writers or preachers of the same name, have exactly agreed upon it. They who have been most strenuous in declaring a particular view of it essential, differ more widely from each other, than from those whom they condemn for rejecting all their interpretations.

Still, with all this variance and inconsistency in which the inquiry has been involved, we cannot approach it without awe. We would not hastily decide upon our own guilt, or the way of escape. We will not boldly descant on what the government of the Eternal demands, or what the labors and sufferings of a Saviour have effected. We open our Bible, and every part speaks to us of the justice and mercy of God, his abhorrence of sin and love of holiness, his gracious promises, and the solemn sanctions by

which all are guarded. We see also a great plan of redemption, in which justice and mercy, promises and sanctions, the condemnation of the guilty and the salvation of the holy, all meet. That plan originates in the love of God, and is consummated in the life and death of Jesus Christ. To Christ it is constantly referred, and emphatically to his *death*. To this an importance is ascribed which we do not find ascribed to any other death; and its influence on man's salvation is expressed in terms as strong and solemn as language affords. This fact we have not the power of overlooking, and no motive for denying. We receive it in faith. We acknowledge it with gratitude. We bless God, and would honor Christ, for the depths of its wisdom and the riches of its love. It is the mission, the religion of Jesus manifested by his life, sealed by his death and resurrection. "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

There are several points then, which we may set aside, as not requiring discussion, because no longer disputed. The field of controversy on the atonement has been greatly narrowed within latter times. The progress of light and liberality has removed many obstacles which once obstructed the very threshhold of the inquiry. So far from being obliged to disen gage the subject from some of its old absurdities, we are accused of injustice, if we charge them upon any sect or church now in being. We will not charge them. We only insist on its being remembered, that they were once common and held to be essential, and that the views which have taken their place are great advances towards those which we believe to be just. There is, first, the origin of the atonement; it is now

admitted (proofs abundant are at hand, to show that it was not always admitted) that in this origin there was nothing of wrath, but of pure love, and love only. Again, it was once said, that this sacrifice procured mercy; it is now said, that mercy procured this sacrifice. "The atonement does not purchase grace, but grace provides the atonement." — "The atonement has no regard to the *production* of love, but simply to the *mode of its expression.* It is not the cause, but the effect of love; not its origin, but its manifestation."* Such distinctions and such language we gladly take from those who differ from us, and we rejoice that the difference is so much reduced. The change extends to the whole effect of the atonement on God and his attributes. No one can forget the horrible language that has been used to express God's turning "from wrath to grace." It is now denied, at least in terms, that any one of God's attributes is changed or affected by this or any event. "Every idea of change in God is blasphemous," says Wardlaw. Again, every thought of a *limited* atonement is now repelled, and it is singular to see precisely the same arguments used against this, that we have always urged against all Calvinistic views of this doctrine. This appears particularly in a work just published in England, and favorably received here, from which we could bring many passages like the following, against a limited atonement. "It exhibits the great and blessed God as mercenary in his gifts, unwilling to yield a single boon but for value received in the sufferings of his son, sufferings which are represented as inducing (not to say bribing) Him to be propitious and

* Wardlaw on Pardon, pp. 154, 161.

merciful."* This objection does not apply to the limited or commercial scheme only. It has other bearings and other uses, and will help here to exhibit our own view of the whole subject. Again, the belief that the atonement is the only mode that could have been devised for the pardon of sin and the salvation of men, is now disclaimed; and the way in which some writers, as Magee, oppose that view, shows, if any such proof were needed, that it was once strenuously maintained.

Similar changes might be traced in regard to strict *satisfaction*, *substitution* and *imputation*. No man will say, either that these words are themselves used as much as they formerly were, or that when used they mean the same thing. We have seen no definition of these terms for some years, to which we cannot assent, chiefly or wholly. Dwight, Stuart, Woods and others, give us reason to say this. We could not use their terms until they are defined; but when defined, there is little in them which we could not say ourselves. It is a prodigious relief from old Calvinism, when men are willing even to illustrate the expressions, "Christ suffered for us," and "died for us," by the labors and sufferings of patriots for their country, and parents for their children, as has been done by writers of recent date. And, once more, we may say of all the peculiar language applied in scripture to the death of Christ and its influence, the general disposition now is, to deny altogether its *literal* signification. Few have forgotten how much Dr. Woods complained of our implying or supposing, that Trinitarians and Calvinists used literally the peculiar terms in which they com-

* Jenkyn on Atonement; a Trinitarian work.

monly speak of the atonement; and how earnestly he insisted that the sacred writers did not use those terms literally. Dr. Dwight, before him, had said this expressly of some of the most important words in the controversy. "We are not in the literal sense *bought* or *purchased* at all. Nor has Christ, in the literal sense, paid any price to purchase mankind from slavery and death." * If such words are not to be understood literally, it follows, first, that the popular doctrine of atonement is relieved of its harshest feature; next, that the agreement of those who use these words may be only verbal; then, that those who do not use the words, but give instead what they suppose to be their true meaning, are not to be condemned as rejecting the doctrine; and then, that the whole question is open, to be determined by the general sense of scripture, according to the fair rules of interpretation, and in the judgment of right reason.

We might go farther in reducing the points in dispute. We might bring Trinitarian statements of the atonement, its design and whole character, in which we can cordially unite, if we may give to the words, as others do, the sense which we think belongs to them. Our limits permit but one or two examples. Magee says, — "The sacrifice of Christ was never deemed by any, who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine of the atonement, to have made God placable, but merely viewed as a *means* appointed by divine wisdom, by which to bestow forgiveness." He also says, — "I know not, nor does it concern me to know, *in what manner* the sacrifice of Christ is connected with

* Dwight's Theology, Vol. I. pp. 412.

the forgiveness of sins; it is enough that this is declared by God to be the medium through which my salvation is effected." * Similar assertions are made by Butler, Macknight and Paley; all believing in some peculiar *connexion* between this event and our forgiveness, but thinking that its nature and operation is not revealed nor material to be known. Murdock thus writes, — "For the attainment of salvation, it may be sufficient that we know, and believe firmly the fact, that there is forgiveness with God for the penitent believer, on account of something which Christ has done or suffered. Not much beyond this have the knowledge and faith of the great body of Christians in every age extended." Why then dispute and condemn? We think this writer mistaken, however, in supposing that the faith of most Christians has not gone beyond this. Of their knowledge it may be true. But that which they have called faith, has often left such moderate conclusions far behind. Still, it is encouraging, that so many of the most learned and pious writers of every name have been content with these statements, and that there is an increasing disposition to rest in such general definitions, as comprising all that our ignorance and the sacredness of the subject will authorise us to assert.

It is also worthy of note, that these are the only definitions or assertions, in which all even of the same church unite. The moment they go beyond this, they separate. Hence the wide differences that have always prevailed in regard to the atonement, among those who have passed under the protecting name of Orthodox. In their definitions of very few doctrines have they agreed. Certainly

* Magee on the Atonement, Vol. I. pp. 18, 20.

not in this. Volumes may be filled with orthodox discourses on the atonement which would never be supposed to have come from those of the same faith. They may be drawn from all countries and all churches. Our own country, its theological schools will afford no stinted reply. Often have we been led to exclaim in despair, "If this doctrine be so plain and fundamental, that we are to be condemned and lost unless we receive it, tell us, we beseech you, what it is; agree upon something; for at present you differ more from each other, than we differ from most of you." Still, of such difference of opinion, we would not complain, and should be the last to express surprise, if our differing brethren would themselves own it, and judge only as they would be judged. We acknowledge a like difference in our own church. There have been those of the Unitarian profession, if there are not still, who have held opinions on this subject, or have used language, to which many cannot agree. The old Polish Unitarians, for instance, represented the death of Christ as an expiation, or expiatory sacrifice. This may be seen in the Racovian and Geneva Catechisms, and in the writings of many English Unitarians; as Emlyn, Samuel Clarke, Henry and John Taylor, and Dr. Price; from whose views, William Penn also seems, on this and some other doctrines to have differed little, if at all. They were far from advocating the thorough calvinistic doctrine of substitution and imputation, and they were as far, in terms, from upholding the simple views which most Unitarians now maintain. In one great principle, they and we, and all of our name of whom we have knowledge, are united; viz, that *the death of Christ is a fundamental*

truth, essential to the perfection and establishment of his religion, and invested in scripture with peculiar importance as a means of forgiveness and salvation. And this we have shown — let it be remembered — is the only principle in which other or any sects have been united, the only view of the atonement to which the whole Christian church has harmoniously subscribed. The question is fair by way of inference, — does not this comprehend all that men can know on this subject, all therefore that they need to know, all that is essential, and all that any are justified in demanding?

Thus far, the way seems to us clear. Yet we would not be unjust to any. We mean not to represent the position of other sects on this subject, to be more like our own than it really is. There is a view in which all others, we believe, except Unitarians, have agreed, besides the general view of which we have spoken. They have not expressed themselves alike on the principle to which we refer, and it is evident they hold it in different senses, and would explain its operation in different ways. Still, there is a principle, a definite and peculiar principle, which appears to belong to their various systems, and to be included under all their modes of expression. It is this; that there is a connexion, not only between the death of Christ and man, but likewise and much more, between the death of Christ and *God.* They believe that this death had an influence upon God, a relation to the nature of his attributes, or the principles and measures of his moral government, totally distinct and different from the influence or relation of any other event that has ever taken place, or any other truth or feature of Christianity.

This we consider as involving the chief, if not the only point, now at issue; and we intend to keep it distinctly in view. There is no dispute as to the necessity of Christ's death, none as to the fact of his dying for sin, none as to the exceeding importance ascribed to the fact in the Scriptures, none as to its vital influence on the salvation of man. These we all believe, and our brethren are uninformed or unjust when they accuse us of rejecting or slighting them. There is no division of Christians into those who believe and those who do not believe in the atonement. The division is into those, on the one hand, who believe this sacrifice was necessary *to make God able or willing to forgive man*, and those on the other hand, who believe this sacrifice was necessary *to make man fit to be forgiven*. This is the distinction, and this the controversy. We may not have expressed it in language to which all will assent. Perhaps that cannot be done in a single sentence, but we will endeavor to explain it impartially, if we may be indulged in some repetition. It is worth some pains to make it clear and fair, for we believe, that multitudes do not understand what the actual question is; and that if they did understand it, they would see that scripture and reason are not altogether on what is now the popular side. While we mean to charge nothing upon others, which they do not believe, we mean if we can, to place what they do believe in a light that will show its true character and tendency.

And here it is proper to define a few terms which we have just used, and may have occasion to use often. The term *satisfaction* refers to a supposed demand, on the part of God, of the *full* and exact penalty annexed to

transgression. His justice must be satisfied, and can only be satisfied by the sufferings of the transgressor or a substitute. That this satisfaction may be rendered, that the transgressor, if penitent, may be released from this penalty and all his sins remitted, a substitute is provided and accepted in the person of Jesus Christ, who suffers and dies *in the place of* sinners, — and that is *substitution* or *vicarious* suffering. By many, this substitution has been regarded as literal and full; denoting the true *imputation* of our sins to Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to us. All the benefits of this satisfaction, substitution and imputation, were formerly restricted to the *elect*, by most of those who held them at all; and that is called the *limited* atonement. This doctrine has probably very few adherents at present, the blessings purchased by Christ's death being now considered as universal, and the limited scheme designated often, by Calvinists themselves, as the *commercial* atonement, implying a literal bargain, debt and transfer. These terms mark the different systems that have been raised on this doctrine. We do not stop to examine those systems, because the terms themselves, as we have said, are seldom used now, because their literal application has been expressly disowned, and because the most important principle which they involve will be fully considered as we proceed. That principle is the same that we have just defined; viz. the necessity of the atonement to affect *God*, and enable him to forgive the penitent. While other peculiarities in the systems referred to, have been renounced or greatly softened, this is retained, and it is all-important that it be understood.

We are now prepared to state the precise difference between what is called the orthodox doctrine of atonement, and what we regard as the scriptural doctrine.

The common doctrine is the following. God has promulgated laws, with the penalty of death to the transgressor. Man transgresses those laws. He must suffer the penalty. He must die, or another whom God accepts, must die in his stead, or the majesty of the divine government is prostrated. The transgressor may repent. But his repentance cannot wipe out the sins o the past. To remit them on repentance alone, would make God's laws impotent, and his justice a mockery; it wo ld "fill the earth with anarchy, and turn it into a hell." * Here, therefore, there is an obstacle to the free pardon of sin, in the very nature of God an l his laws. That obstacle can be removed only by an infinite expiation or sacrifice for sin. Christ, an infinite being, offers himself as this sacrifice, and is accepted. He dies in the place of sinners, and through his blood, and that alone, they may be forgiven and saved. He gives himself "as a propitiation, or as that which renders it consistent with justice, that God should be propitious to sinners." † Through the merits of Christ's death, mercy is offered to the sinner. He must repent and obey, but repentance and obedience are in no sense the ground of his justification. Nothing but such a sin-offering could make it just or safe to pardon the sinner, whatever his subsequent disposition or present character. Christ died not merely to convince and convert men, but to render it *consistent* and *safe* to forgive men when they are convinced and converted. This constituted its necessity, this is its efficacy and glory.

* Beecher. † Wayland.

Such is the generally received doctrine of atonement. We will next give our own view of the true doctrine.

We believe SIN to be the great and only obstacle to forgiveness and salvation. That obstacle is insurmountable so long as it exists. It can be removed only by its own destruction. Christ lived and died to destroy it. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." He came to "save his people from their *sins*." "God sent him to bless us, in turning away every one of us from his *iniquities*." This is the design of the gospel dispensation, — of the mission, teaching, examples, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, — to bring men into a state of *reconciliation* with God. Atonement is reconciliation. And a state of reconciliation is a state of submission, faith, repentance and obedience. This state, this spiritual condition, all God's threatenings and promises, all his revelations and dealings, especially his free gift of a Savior, are designed to produce. If they do produce it in any soul, if they bring a sinner to obey God, the purpose for which Christ came is answered upon that man, for he is saved from sin; he is forgiven through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. If he is not brought into submission and obedience, but continues in sin, he is not forgiven, and no grace or sacrifice will avail him anything; if he is not saved from sin, he is not saved at all. SIN, we repeat, is the only obstacle, and the necessity and purpose of the mediation of Christ is to save man from sin. We do not declare, that it can have no other purpose or efficacy. But there is nothing to embolden us to say it *must* have some other efficacy. The only efficacy of

which we are confident, is a moral efficacy. We see nothing in the character or laws of God, nothing in the interests of his kingdom, nothing in reason, nature or scripture, to prevent his forgiving sin, when sin is repented of and forsaken. If there be any one thing, for which the truth and justice, as well as mercy of God, are pledged, it is the forgiveness of the penitent and submissive. We are sure, therefore, that whenever and by whatever means, the death of Christ humbles and converts the soul, or *saves from sin*, its design is answered. The existence of sin constituted its necessity, the removal of sin constitutes its glory. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us *from all iniquity*, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 14.)

These we believe to be the views of the two parties to this controversy. To show them in a single sentence. It is believed, on the one hand, that God could not forgive sin freely on repentance, and that the death of Christ was necessary to enable him to do so consistently with the honor of his character and the safety of his kingdom. It is believed, on the other hand, that God can forgive sin on repentance, that he has promised always to do so, and that the death of Christ was necessary to bring men to repentance, that they might be forgiven.

We turn now to the Scriptures. We regard the Word of God as the only authority. We are anxious to give a fair view of its testimony on this subject, though it must necessarily be general.

First, we lay out of the case all *unscriptural* terms, though so frequently and confidently used in this con-

nexion as to have become sacred to many. "Atoning blood," "blood-bought souls," "the merits of Christ," "vicarious sufferings" and "vicarious punishment," "substitute" and "substitution," "justice satisfied," "pardon purchased," "God reconciled or appeased," these are all human. These, and many more with which a certain class of writings abound, have no authority in scripture, and cannot be necessary to any statements of the scripture doctrine of atonement.

Next, as to the word *atonement*. It is not to be forgotten that it occurs but once in the New Testament; and that there it has not the signification commonly put upon it. All agree that it should have been rendered "reconciliation," as the same word is in every other place; and that it is *we* who receive it, and not God. "By whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. v. 11.) In this expression, Magee says, "there is an actual impropriety;" a singular admission as to the only use of the word in all the Christian records. It is to be observed, too, that the original word here rendered atonement, and meaning reconciliation, is never found in the Old Testament, in connexion with legal atonements. The Hebrew word for "atonement" is very different, and means simply to *cover over*, containing in itself no idea of sacrifice, substitution or expiation. This word, *copher*, has in a few instances the meaning of reconcile or reconciliation, but is applied to places more than to people, and means to cleanse those places, to make them fit for the service of God. (Lev. vi. 30, viii. 15, xvi. 20.) This last may be taken as the general and proper sense of the word *atone* in the Old Testament. From meaning to cover up, to conceal deformity or impurity, it comes to signify, to re-

move impurity, to purge, to cleanse, to prepare for sacred use; and is thus applied to all kinds of legal purification, whether of man or things, often to inanimate objects, as the sanctuary, the altar, sacred implements and garments. * For all these, when by any accident or trespass, they become unclean, an atonement was said to be made, *i. e.* they were cleansed and fitted for religious service. This signification, be it noted, prevails in all the Jewish atonements. When offered for men, the offence is usually ceremonial, and the purpose and only efficacy of the atonement is to remove a ritual disqualification, and admit the offender again to the service of God. True, the offence is sometimes called a *sin*, but even then it means, for the most part, only a ritual offence, and is expressly termed a "sin of ignorance." We find constantly such expressions as these — "if a soul shall sin through ignorance" — "if the sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge" — "though he wist it not, yet he is guilty, and shall bear his iniquity" — and "the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred, and wist it not; and it shall be forgiven him." (Lev. iv. 2, 23; v. 17, 18.) If these atonements are typical of that made by Christ, what character do they give it? † We are aware, that there are other kinds

* The half-shekel required of every man when the people were numbered, was called "the atonement money" — and "an atonement for your souls" — and "a *ransom* for his soul unto the Lord." Exod. xxx. 12—16.

† In the edition of Calmet, by Robinson of Andover, it is denied that the word atonement means a ransom, price or purchase in the New Testament; and it is said moreover that "to call that sacrifice (the death of Christ) the atonement, instead of *the means of atonement*, is an incorrect application of the word," — Art. Atonement.

of atonement, made for moral offences, to remove the divine displeasure, or arrest punishment. But the most remarkable of these are not of the sacrificial kind; there was no sacrifice, but only a prayer, or some religious service; as in Ex. xxxii. 30; Num. xvi. 47. An atonement was said to be made in these and other instances, though there was no victim, no blood shed. And when there was a victim, there is no appearance or intimation of a substitution for sin. No human life was taken, unless that of the guilty for his own sin. (Numb. xxv. 13; 2 Sam. xxi. 3—9.) There was no proper vicarious punishment. There was no expiation of sin, or redemption of the guilty, by the death of the innocent. The only ceremony that bears any resemblance to substitution for sin, is that of the scape-goat; and even there the animal that is said to "bear upon him all their iniquities," *was not slain.*

We see nothing, then, in the use of the word atonement, in any part of the scriptures, to favor the idea which supports the prevailing system; viz that God cannot forgive sin on repentance, or that any forms or sacrifices will render him propitious when right dispositions would not, or that he ever punishes the innocent for the guilty. There is absolutely nothing in the Levitical atonements, or in any of the Jewish sacrifices, countenancing the principle of strict substitution, vicarious suffering, or any feature of the high doctrine of atonement since maintained. All sacrifices had, we believe, a human, not a divine origin; but having become universal, the Deity incorporated them with the Jewish religion, with such restrictions as would serve, while they were adapted to the infancy of the world, to keep the chosen people distinct from all other

nations, and yet more, to keep them in the constant thought of their dependence upon God, and accountableness to him; impressing upon them the necessity of complete purity in all their approaches to him, and teaching them, especially, that while these offerings were appointed to secure or restore to them their religious privileges, they removed nothing but *external* pollution. This last truth was particularly important, and we find all subsequent Jewish teachers and prophets insisting upon it. No feature of the Jewish religion is more prominent than the uselessness of sacrifice without obedience. The word of Jehovah seems sometimes almost to forbid, to reject with indignation, all sacrifices; as in the first chapter of Isaiah. David also says, — "sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not required." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Indeed, the great moral lesson pervading the whole even of a ritual religion, addressed to an earthly and sensual people, is, — "to obey is better than sacrifice." And yet, there are those, who make that perfect religion to which Judaism was but preparatory, to place sacrifice before obedience and before mercy; representing the whole of Christianity to rest upon a literal sacrifice for sin, through which alone mercy flows, sin is removed, and salvation purchased. In proof of this singular doctrine, they appeal confidently to the old dispensation. With what reason, we must leave our readers to judge.

The view we have taken of sacrifices is abundantly supported in the New Testament. Even the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, makes it his chief object, while he traces to the extreme limit the analogy of the two services, to establish the infinite *superiority* of the

Christian over the Jewish, in point of spirituality. Now if the Jewish sacrifices procured no favor but that of religious service, removed no defilement but ceremonial, effected a reconciliation only so far as they allowed a return to forfeited privileges, and aimed preeminently at the purification of the heart and obedience of the life, as most acceptable, — it is making the Christian sacrifice, not more spiritual, but more ritual, to represent it as of itself acting directly upon God, to render him propitious ; of itself obtaining, from him, remission of sins ; of itself necessary to enable him to forgive, when no other service, no sacrifice of a broken heart, or of righteousness, or of repentance and obedience, could avail with him. We insist that the comparison, on such a system, is greatly to the injury of Christianity. We are willing to rest the argument here.

There is a strong passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews : "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb. x. 4.) It did not take away, even under the law, any sins except those of a legal or ceremonial nature. It removed disqualifications for the worship of God, and procured or restored privileges, by the faithful *use* of which the sin of the soul might be taken away. It declared the polluting and condemning power of sin, God's abhorrence of it, and the way in which it could be removed. And there, precisely there, is the analogy between that blood and the blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." How? By sealing a covenant, fulfilling promises, confirming truths, extending privileges, restoring to forfeited blessing, imparting influences, giving motives and sanctions, *by the faithful use of which* the soul itself may

be cleansed from sin and reconciled to God. It manifests the free, unpurchased mercy of God, his abhorrence of sin, his approbation of purity, and the unspeakable love of his son, "who gave himself for us, the just or the unjust, that he might bring us to God," — all calculated, in an infinitely higher degree than any former manifestations or sacrifices, to have this effect, *to bring us to God.* "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Our own views could not be better expressed. There is our interpretation of all the passages which bring into comparison the Jewish and Christian sacrifices. The first pertained chiefly to the purification of the flesh, the last to that of the conscience. Both were designed to secure privilege, and open the way to pardon. Both were to offer mercy to the penitent, to invite the sinner near, to express and put within the reach of all, a state of reconciliation with God. And if the former sacrifices could do this, how much more the latter? The blood of Christ can purge the conscience, *must* purge the conscience, from dead works to serve the living God. That is its design. That, if properly regarded, thankfully, penitently, and faithfully improved, will be its efficacy and salvation.

This is our understanding of that large class of passages which speak of the blood or sacrifice of Christ, and connect with his death sacrificial terms. He was a sacrifice, required, not by the justice of God to satisfy it, or by the mercy of God to make it free, but by the sins of

men, to remove them. "He appeared *to put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself;" to put it away, to subdue its power, to destroy its dominion, and thus save from its condemnation. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" to bear them in the same sense in which he "took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," as Matthew explains Isaiah. And John says, "Behold the lamb of God, who *taketh away* the sins of the world." Can sin be taken away, except by being subdued? Can it be subdued except by a moral power, the spiritual energy of truth and love, the power of God's grace and Christ's mediation, acting upon the *soul*, purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this Christ offered himself. For this, as our Passover, he was sacrificed for us; to deliver us from bondage, — the bondage of ignorance and sin.

We have spent the more time on the use of sacrificial language, because their is no stronger language connected with this subject, and because all other peculiar language may be understood on similar principles. Indeed, there is but one other class of passages that can be supposed to present any difficulty; those which state that Christ "suffered for us," "died for us," &c. — on which the old doctrine of substitution was raised, and which lead many still to cling to a vague idea of the same kind. It is a remarkable proof of the power of system and education, that men could ever put upon such simple words a meaning so uncommon and unauthorized. What is meant, or understood, when it is said that one person suffers or dies for another? Simply that he suffers or dies *for his benefit*, in some way. Did not Christ live for us? Does that mean that he lived in our stead? Did he not rise

from the grave for us? Was it in our stead? Nay if he, died in our stead, why do we die? Peter writes, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." How follow his steps? Not by suffering as substitutes for others, and making an atonement. John argues, that as Christ, "laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." He understood it therefore as we do. Jesus himself says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep;" he will labor and bleed for them, and sacrifice life, if necessary, in their behalf. If this is a low view of the death of Christ, remember who it is that authorizes it, and find, if you can, a single assertion of Christ inconsistent with it.

There are also the expressions, "in our behalf," "for our sake." Neither of them, that we can find, is ever applied directly to Christ's dying for us, but they are in frequent use, and are supposed to have a peculiar meaning. Let it be observed, then, that Paul said to the Phillipians, "For *unto you* it is given, *in the behalf of Christ*, not only to believe in him, but also *to suffer for his sake*." And to the Corinthians he writes, — "we which live are always *delivered unto death for Jesus' sake*," —one of the strongest expressions ever applied to Christ, and made to mean, in that relation, some kind of substitution.

It is also said of the Messiah, — "he shall bear their iniquities," — the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." But such language is not confined to Christ. Aaron was "to bear the iniquity of the holy things," &c. (Ex. xxviii. 38.) Of the priests it is said, "God hath given it to you to bear the iniquity o the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord. (Lev. x. 17.)

God says to Ezekiel, (iv. 5,) "thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Israel;" and this without any sacrifice or substitution. In that remarkable chapter, (Isaiah liii.) on which all views of vicarious suffering must depend, it is said of Christ, "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." This ought to serve as a key to the whole chapter, and all similar language. It corresponds exactly to the words in which, as we have seen, Matthew quotes Isaiah; "himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses;" he pitied them, and lived, suffered, died, to heal or remove them. Let it be remembered, this is Matthew's interpretation of the language of Isaiah. But it is also said, — "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Is not that substitution? We answer, no one now takes this language literally. No one believes, with Luther, that Christ was actually chastised or punished, "as the greatest transgressor, murderer, &c. — or, with Calvin, "that the burthen of damnation, from which we were delivered, was laid upon Christ."* Let it be considered by the devout of every name, whether every idea of substituted punishment or suffering, and all *literal* construction of such passages as those in Isaiah, do not amount to what Luther and Calvin believed. No one openly maintains, that Christ was, in any proper sense, *chastised*, to save us

* These views may have been drawn from the two passages, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" (Gal. iii. 13,) — and, "he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," (2 Cor. v. 21.) — passages which mean simply that Christ was treated by men as "a sinner," and permitted by his Father to suffer the ignominious death of one "accursed;" to save us from the curse of the law, and from sin.

from the chastisement we deserved, or that we are literally and directly healed by his stripes. What does it mean? Let Peter tell us, — "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye are healed." By the sorrows and sufferings of Christ, by his chastisement and death, being "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," by all that was laid upon him and all that he did, we are delivered from ignorance, bondage and death; for this high moral purpose, —*that we may die to sin and live to righteousness*, — then and then only, shall we be healed by his stripes; having, as the apostle explains, "*returned unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls.*" (1 Peter ii. 24, 25.)

This is our faith. Here do we see the necessity of Christ's death, and here its purpose and efficacy. Still more, in such declarations we find a principle of interpretation for all peculiar terms and passages connected with this subject. Taking the common admitted sense of language in all other connexions, we form that principle on those repeated declarations of scripture, which express plainly, the purpose of Christ's death. We are amazed that these are not more considered. They admit of but one construction, and that is wholly in favor of the *moral* influences of that great event. We can quote but few. That in Hebrews ix. 14, we have given, and another from Peter, just considered. Paul says, — "Christ died for all, that they which live *should not live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.*" Again, — "he gave himself for our sins, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world.* And again, — "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem

us *from all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works*." * All such passages assert, that the great purpose of Christ's death, was to deliver men from their *sins*. These alone have they to fear, these alone hinder their salvation; from these did Christ live and die to redeem them. "He washed us *from our sins* in his own blood." But his blood will not wash us from our sins, unless it leads us to forsake those sins. On no other condition does the word of God hold out the promise of redemption. This is itself redemption. It is deliverance, not from punishment directly, but from sin, which is its own punishment.

To bring in such redemption, Christ died, as the scriptures declare. But this is not all. They assign other purposes also, though all subservient to this. It is one of the errors common on this subject, to separate Christ's death from his life, his character and truth. It is often viewed in but one of its aspects, and the attention and interest are confined to a single class of passages, those which represent his death as a sacrifice or propitiation. It is forgotten that our Lord himself never speaks of his death in that way, but that both he and his apostles ascribe to it other characters and purposes. He never speaks of himself or of his death as a sacrifice or sin-offering, or propitiation, or atonement, or substitution of any kind. But once does he use the term *ransom*, and then, as the connexion shows, only in the general sense of deliverance, or means of deliverance, the sense which the word usually bears. (Matt. xx. 28.) There is no authority in

* 2 Cor. v. 15. Gal. i. 4. Titus ii. 14. — See also, Acts iii. 26. Eph. v. 27. 1 Peter iii. 18.

scripture for understanding *ransom* in any other sense, than that of release from bondage or deliverance from evil, temporal or spiritual. As applied to Christ, it is commonly in the form of a verb, and rendered *redeem;* and then its meaning is seen in a passage already used by us, — "that he might redeem us *from all iniquity*." When we are said to be "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," that from which we are redeemed is "our vain conversation." (1 Peter i. 18, 19.) So that it is not from God, or from justice, or from penalties alone, that we are to be ransomed and redeemed, but from our vanity and iniquity, from the slavery of sin. Look then at the other purposes which Christ connects with his own death. In one of the most solemn asseverations, not referring directly to his death, but declaring the whole purpose of his mission, he says: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, *that I should bear witness unto the truth*." (John xviii. 37.) His comparison of himself to the good shepherd giving his life for his sheep, we have noticed; if it be called substitution, it is of a kind in which we cordially believe. The fulfilment of *prophecy* is another object which he more than once connects with his life and sufferings; as in Luke xxiv. 44. Again, he refers to his death as designed *to ratify the new covenant* with his blood, (Matt. xxvi. 28,) to seal and confirm the whole dispensation. And again, he tells us it behoved him to suffer, that *repentance and remission of sins* should be preached, &c. (Luke xxiv. 46, 47.)

Several other purposes are assigned by Christ's apostles, to his sufferings and death, — as that he might "learn obedience, and be made perfect," — that he might "leave

us an example,"— that he might "slay the enmity" between the Jews and Gentiles, and *reconcile* both unto God, making "both one," (at-one-ment.) But leaving all others, there is one purpose assigned by our Lord himself, and referred to in the Epistles in a distinguished manner; viz. his *resurrection.* Jesus died that he might abolish death and bring life and immortality to light. Hear his own words, — "I lay down my life, *that I might take it again.*" (John x. 17.) Could there be a higher purpose? Is anything of greater moment or of independent value? "If Christ be not *risen*, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "If Christ be not *raised*, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (1 Cor. xv. 14, 17.) This is strong language. Stronger is not applied to any part of this subject. And they are blinded or bold, who overlook such declarations, who condemn others for placing these among the high purposes of Christ's death, and themselves restrict the design and influence of that event to a single point on which Jesus never dwelt. The apostle does not hesitate to ascribe our justification and salvation directly to the fact or power of the resurrection of Christ, "who was delivered for our offences, and *raised again for our justification.*" (Rom. iv. 25.) "It is Christ that died, *yea* RATHER *that is risen again*," &c. (Rom. viii. 34.) And still more remarkably, in immediate connexion with the only mention of the atonement, Paul says, — "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, MUCH MORE, *being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* (Rom. v. 10.) Whatever other view may be taken of these passages, they make the resurrec-

tion of Christ not less prominent, as a means of salvation, than his death. (See Rom. x. 9.)

We may here take a passage from Henry Taylor showing the error of those who suppose the scriptures ascribe our salvation to one event, or to one article of belief alone. "We are said to be saved by faith, by works, by the word of God, by baptism, by hope, by grace, by the death of Christ, by his life, by the words of St. Peter, by the words of St. Paul, by the foolishness of preaching, by calling on the name of the Lord, by enduring unto the end, &c.; by all these causes singly, we are said to be saved in the New Testament; and yet it is most certain, that not one of them must be so understood as to exclude all the rest." This is an important fact. It is not duly considered. We doubt if it be fully known. Many writers and preachers ascribe salvation invariably and exclusively to Christ's death, without adverting to the fact, that the scriptures lay frequent and earnest stress on his life, character, truth, resurrection, &c., as means and motives of redemption. In truth, all these are comprised in the *death* of Christ; it seals them all, it is essential to all, it expresses all; and therefore it is used often as being in itself *all*. And yet it cannot be separated from these other views. What were the death of Christ without his life, — such a life as he led? Was not that life a sacrifice, from its beginning to its close, — a sacrifice for sin, — made necessary by sin, and offered to take away sin? What would the death of Christ be, apart from the truths which he taught? What would it be without his example? What without his resurrection? These are all essential parts of a gracious whole. These are all means of salvation; dissipating error, es-

tablishing truth, shaming ingratitude, subduing sin, conquering enmity, abolishing the power and the fear of death, diffusing wide the light of life. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

We often hear it said, that sins are forgiven *for Christ's sake*, as if this expression were frequent in scripture. It is not so. In terms it occurs but once; "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. iv. 32.) The original is *in* or *through* Christ; which shows plainly its meaning. The word *sake* is more frequently connected with God, than with Christ. In the Old Testament, God is often said to do certain things "for his name's sake," that is, for his truth or glory. He is said to "*pardon* for his name's sake," and to redeem and save "for his *mercy's* sake:" nor is it ever intimated, that he cannot pardon and save, except for the sake of another. But what is yet more to our purpose, we are called, in the above passage, "to *forgive one another*, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us." Christ himself exhorts us to forgive, as a condition of being forgiven; to pray God to "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Moreover he gives us the emphatic assurance, — Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:" and enforces the same by some of the most striking of his parables. (Matt. xviii.) What light does all this throw upon the nature and measure of the divine forgiveness! It forbids us to connect with God any terms or methods of pardon, on which we are not willing to act ourselves. It allows us to expect of God such terms, such disposition and treatment, as we extend towards others. It absolutely repels all idea of substitution and literal sacrifice,

as pre-requisites to pardon. For what good man, what kind parent, or just government, ever did, or ever could, deal with an offending brother, child or subject, on the principle of substitution, *the sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty*? Not one; no, not one.

Having now examined every important class of passages and kind of terms supposed to favor the prevalent views of atonement, we proceed to state distinctly, in one view, the scripture doctrine of forgiveness. It is simple and ought to be conclusive.

The scripture doctrine of forgiveness is this. God is *essentially* merciful and placable. He will by no means clear the guilty, but he will always regard the penitent with favor. He has expressly and solemnly made *repentance* the condition of forgiveness. All the attributes of his character, all the promises and threatenings of his word, all his dealings with his people, and all the principles and purposes of his moral government, are pledges, that he will forgive those who *forsake their sins;* which is our definition of repentance.

That God is essentially merciful and placable, is not disputed, and we need not produce the many proofs of it which the scriptures contain. From the giving of the law, though in the midst of clouds and tempests, through the whole of the old dispensations, we have the assurance that God is "merciful and gracious," — "shewing mercy unto them that love him and keep his commandments," — "a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness." The doctrine of the new dispensation, on this point, may be seen in the character of a FATHER constantly given to God, and in the

affecting parable of the prodigal son, so rich, so eloquent in assurances of God's readiness to forgive and embrace the returning penitent. Were the bible silent on this subject, except in that single parable, we should point to that as a demonstration of the perfect placability of the Deity, and of the efficacy of repentance to regain his forfeited favor. We add, there is not an intimation in the scriptures, that this placability of God and efficacy of repentance were owing to any other being, or dependent upon any other event or cause, except his own original and unalterable nature. God is, *of himself*, ready to forgive those who repent. In proof of this, we refer next to express promises. The bible is full of promises of mercy and acceptance to the penitent and obedient. "If thou do well, shalt thou not be accepted?" said the Lord to Cain. (Gen. iv. 7.) The promise was constantly given to the rebellious people of Israel, that they should be forgiven and blessed, if they would return from their wanderings. "Turn to God and live," "turn from your sins and not die," is the message of all the prophets. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin," says Ezekiel, in that striking chapter (xviii.) in which the nature of sin and the terms of pardon are so repeatedly and emphatically set forth. How remarkably explicit is this declaration: "when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, *he shall save his soul alive.*" And again, — "in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live; observe, in *his righteousness.* Add to these one passage from Isaiah, and the point will be established, if words can do it. "*Let the wicked forsake his way,*

and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. lv. 7.) These passages are explicit. They are positive. They leave no room for conjecture. They will bear no doubtful or double sense. They teach one doctrine, the certainty of pardon to all who *repent*. If they do not teach that, they teach nothing. If they do not teach that no words can teach it.

Opening the New Testament, we find the great duty there inculcated is repentance, and that as the express condition of forgiveness and acceptance. John and Jesus both began their preaching with "*Repent* or *reform*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Peter called on all to repent, assuring them of acceptance, if they feared God and worked righteousness. Paul says the theme of his preaching was, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Observe those words, — *faithful and* JUST *to forgive us our sins*, if we confess, *i. e.* own and forsake them. Our Saviour has made his own doctrine of forgiveness plain, by presenting so often the parental character of God, by promising us forgiveness if we forgive others, by telling us to forgive an offending brother seven times in a day if he turn to us, saying, *I repent*, — and by the parable already referred to, where the father had compassion upon the penitent son, "when he was yet *a great way off*," and waited not, but ran to embrace him. In no instance does Christ refer to his death as *procuring* pardon, nor has he or any sacred writer told us, as has been asserted, "that we

must rely on his atoning blood as the *sole ground of forgiveness.*" * He tells us that his blood is "shed for the remission of sins;" but he leaves us in no doubt as to the manner in which that blood is to obtain remission of sins. It must work repentance. In one of the last declarations of his life, he explains the purpose of his sufferings, by bringing into immediate connexion, "repentance and remission of sins," as if the former were the express and only condition of the latter. (Luke xxiv. 46, 47.) The same important connexion is observed by Peter in his preaching, and viewed by him as the very purpose of Christ's exaltation. "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give *repentance* to Israel and *forgiveness of sins.*" (Acts v. 31.)

The same is taught, though in a different way, in the only place in which the doctrine of reconciliation or atonement is explained. (2 Cor. v.) Reconciliation is there described as a great *duty*, to which we are to be exhorted and are to exhort all. It is a state of favor, into which, not God, but man, is to be brought. Three times is this stated within a short space. The world is to be reconciled to God, not God to the world. The change must be in the sinner; and that change is *repentance.* That, and nothing else, will ensure reconciliation. It *is* reconciliation.

We read the same great truth in all those passages, in which the purpose of Christ's death is expressly declared to be, to "turn us from iniquity," "cleanse us from sin," &c. All will agree, probably, that we cannot be turned from iniquity," or cleansed frnm sin, without repentance.

* Wood's Letters to Unitarians, p. 105.

The purpose of Christ's death then is, to produce repentance; and when it does have this effect, all the privileges and blessings secured by his death will follow; not as merited by him who repents, but freely bestowed as the gift of God, — not of debt, but of *grace*." Every privilege is a free gift. Every blessing is of grace, unpurchased, but not unconditional. "The grace of God that *bringeth salvation* hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, *we should live soberly, righteously, and godly*, in this present world. (Titus ii. 11, 12.)

Such is the doctrine of the Bible on the terms of acceptance with God. Many other passages and proofs we would gladly adduce, but we must content ourselves with these, and with the conviction that there is nothing revealed inconsistent with these. To these we appeal with entire confidence and humble gratitude. They confound, they mock us, if they do not teach the absolute placability of God, and the complete efficacy of repentance through his forbearance and mercy. His forbearance and mercy are left open to abuse, it may be objected. So they are under any form of doctrine, with any views. They may be abused, if men will abuse them. But if there be any doctrine which will save them from abuse, it is, that God is love, that in love and not in wrath, he gave his Son to live and die for us, and that to the gift of salvation proffered in Jesus, he has annexed the condition, the gracious but fearful condition, of repentance, obedience; that we die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. If there be moral power in any views, the combined power of terror and of love, it is here. If there be danger in such a doctrine, it is because there is danger in every doctrine; or

rather, danger in every heart, danger in human nature, with its infirmities and passions, its blindness, selfishness, earthliness, and wilful debasement. From this danger are we to be guarded, from these corruptions are we to be saved, by the grace of God, by the teaching, and tears, and blood, and glory of Christ, — *saved from our sins.*

This do the Scriptures teach. Why is not this believed and admitted by all? How is it evaded or differently explained? This is our only remaining inquiry, but it is important and must not be slighted.

We ask, then, why the view now taken of the language of scripture, in favor of the efficacy of repentance, is not taken by all Christians? Why have men thought it necessary and right to give it a different construction? We can assign but two reasons. First, they have thought that all forgiveness and salvation are ascribed in scripture to the sacrifice of Christ, and therefore all other language *must* be understood consistently with that fact. And, secondly, they have supposed it not *safe* for God to forgive sin on repentance alone, but subversive of the principles and purposes of his moral government. Here is an argument from scripture, and another from reason. Let us weigh them.

The argument from scripture we have examined. And have seen, that while the scriptures do ascribe forgiveness and salvation to the sacrifice made by Christ, they show that the efficacy of that sacrifice is a moral efficacy, and that it will not obtain forgiveness and salvation for any one, except as it purifies the heart, works repentance, and saves from sin. We have seen that the strongest sacri-

ficial language implies or allows this, and that there is much other language which expressly teaches it, and *requires* us to believe it. We have seen, moreover, that salvation is not ascribed to the death of Christ alone, but also to his life, his truth, his resurrection, &c. The argument of the objector fails, therefore, unless he can find something in scripture which forbids us to believe in the efficacy of repentance. This is not pretended. No one will attempt to prove from the Bible, that God cannot or will not forgive him who truly repents. There is a common opinion, that repentance alone is not sufficient; but that opinion rests more upon reason than revelation. With many, we are inclined to think, it is owing to a mere verbal difference, the idea that repentance means only "sorrow for sin." Then, indeed, it would be insufficient. Then it would be unsafe. But not so is it to be understood. Not so have we used it in this inquiry, nor do we believe this to be its scripture sense. To repent is to *turn from sin.* Repentance is reformation. At least such we regard it practically, and as such we are reasoning upon it. And when so viewed, more than half the objections that we have ever seen urged against this doctrine, fall to the ground. Thus Wardlaw insists, that if pardon is offered to sinners, "it must be connected with provision for their return, at the same time, to loyal subjection and obedience." * And he appears to think this an objection to the doctrine of forgiveness on repentance; as if repentance did not itself suppose and mean a return to loyal subjection and obedience. So also Dr. Woods argues upon "the hindrance there is in the way of God's

* Discourses on Socinianism, p. 231.

showing the same favor to transgressors, as to the obedient." * This has no relation to the question. The question is, is there any hindrance in the way of God's showing favor to those who cease to be transgressors, those who repent and obey. True, Dr. Woods thinks there is, or was, a hindrance even to that. "There was, as we apprehend, a mighty obstacle in the way of forgiveness, which *no penitence, obedience or suffering of sinners could ever remove.*" † We have marked this last clause, for we look upon it with amazement, with shuddering. What does it declare? Man may repent, man may obey, he may cease to do evil and learn to do well, he may go to his Father in submission and the agony of supplication, he may go with the sacrifices of a contrite and broken heart, yea, with the "sacrifices of righteousness," — yet he cannot be received, he cannot be forgiven! No, he *cannot*. There is a mighty obstacle in the way. God wants either the disposition or the power, (soften it, if you can, it does come to this, even with the comparative mildness of modern statements;) the Almighty, the gracious God, wants either the disposition or the power to forgive this humble, penitent, *obedient* sufferer. There is nothing in the Father himself that can save him. He must die, he must die, not in his sins, but in his repentance; not in his rebellion, but in his submission and obedience; he must perish everlastingly, *unless* another being come to his ransom, unless the innocent and infinite consent to suffer and die in his stead.

This is the doctrine which, we aver, men do not draw from the scriptures. They never state it in scripture lan-

* Letters to Unitarians, p. 102. † Reply to Dr. Ware, p, 208.

guage. They never bring for it direct scripture proof. It is a doctrine of inference. It stands upon reasoning. And while it is unaccountable, that men can be willing to rest so stupendous a doctrine upon anything but the clearest declarations of God's word, it is equally unaccountable that any can be satisfied or deceived by the reasoning that commonly sustains it. What is that reasoning?

That we may do it no injustice, we will give it in the words of Dr. Dwight. "When the law was published, God declared, that the sinner should die. Now, he must declare, by pardoning the sinner, that he should not die. Yet no change in the state of things had taken place, nor is any change supposed to have taken place, to occasion this change in the divine conduct. No reason is even supposed, why the conduct of God should be thus changed. The change itself must, of course, be wanton, causeless, and disgraceful to the divine character. In pardoning the transgressor, God would declare that the law was not just." * The first obvious defect in this remarkable chain of reasoning, is that it goes against *all* methods of pardon equally. It proves, if it prove anything, that God can never pardon, on any ground, without violating his own law. Though the sinner believe in atoning blood, and is pardoned through its efficacy, still there is the law, that the sinner shall die. The law did not say that a *substitute* might die for the sinner, — it said, *the sinner* should die. "*The soul that sinneth,* IT *shall die.*" Dr. Dwight overthrows, therefore, his own system, beside bringing a charge of wantonness which we cannot repeat. But let us ask, what was intended, when God declared

* Dwight's Theology, Vol. II. p. 379.

that the sinner should die? Was it intended that every sinner should die, whatever the degree of his sin, and however short its continuance? Then does it again frustrate all possibility of pardon and salvation, on any scheme, since all are sinners. No, — it was intended, that he who *continues in sin* should die. Look at God's threatenings and promises. Are they not all conditional? Look at that chapter (Ezek. xviii.) in which the favorite language is found. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The very object of the chapter is to show, that God will punish the sinner only for his own sins, and for his *continuance* in sin, while he assures him again and again, that if he will *turn from his sins* "he shall surely live, he shall *not die*." The law then is executed, not violated, when the penitent transgressor is pardoned. The law requires that he be pardoned. If God did *not* pardon him, he would *then* declare that the law was not just. He does pardon him, and thus sustains the law, sustains his own justice and faithfulness. A change *had* taken place, a change *is* supposed, not in God, but in man. He has repented. He is no longer a transgressor. He is converted into an obedient subject. He is set at-one with God. He is reconciled to God, and "God is faithful and just to forgive him."

This view of the divine law is sustained by every exercise of pardon. It is particularly sustained by the cases on record, in which individuals and nations were pardoned directly, and threatened punishment or calamity averted by their repentance. Besides ordinary instances in the history of the Israelites, the cases of Hezekiah, and the people of Nineveh, are prominent; the first of a righteous man, who plead his own obedience with God, and

obtained a suspension of the sentence of death which had been passed against him; (Isai. xxxviii.) — the last, of a wicked people, threatened with destruction on account of their wickedness, but mourning and repenting, until God himself is said to have "repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not." (Jonah iii.*) Indeed, what is it, but the exercise of that perfect justice and mercy, which constitute the glory of God's moral character, and in which we all confide? Who believes, who ever did or could believe, that God will scorn and condemn those, who turn from their evil ways to seek and serve him?

"No, he will not condemn them, he will pardon and save them," says the reasoner with whom we are arguing. "He will pardon, but it will be because satisfaction has been made to violated law and inflexible justice. It will be through the influence of the atonement alone." This is another form of reasoning in question, and is the common answer to all the passages which we have brought in favor of forgiveness on repentance. We are told that those very passages are founded, — this, at least, is implied and required by the argument, — those very promises of mercy to the penitent are made, *on the ground of the atonement*, in view of the efficacy, as well in anticipation, as in retrospection, of the death of Christ. No sinner was ever forgiven, or ever can be, on any other ground. This is the assumption; and our first reply to it is, that it is nothing more than assumption. It is asserted entirely without proof. We know but of one passage of scripture that is ever adduced as directly supporting it. That is

* See also Ex. xxxii. 14. 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. Jer. xxvi. 19. Joel ii. 13.

Rom. iii. 25, 26, — "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The single clause "for the remission of *sins that are past*," is taken as proof, that the influence of the atonement reaches back to all sins that have ever been forgiven. This we must call an assumption. The words refer clearly to individual sins. All sins that have been committed are past sins. It is a slender foundation, on which to raise the amazing declaration, that mercy was never offered even to the penitent, except in view and in virtue of this one sacrifice for sin; that all men of all ages and nations have been pardoned through this efficacy, if at all; and yet more, through *faith* in this efficacy. For this is an important part of the reasoning, that not only is the infinite satisfaction itself necessary, but that knowledge of it, and faith in it, by every individual who is to be saved by it, are equally necessary. "No man is pardoned," says Dwight, "merely because of the atonement made by Christ; but because of his own acceptance, also, of that atonement, by faith." And this must be true, of all who lived centuries before Christ, of all heathen then and now, of all who are denied the knowledge of Christ, or are unable to take this view of his death, and of all who die in infancy! They could not be saved without the atonement, they cannot be saved now without faith in it.*

* Mr. Abbot is the only writer we have seen, who expressly says that the atonement may save even those who have no knowledge of it, if they only repent, though they could not be saved without it.

Another part of the passage in Romans is confidently appealed to in support of this reasoning; — "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This also is taken as proof, that there was once an opposition between these two characters in God, his being "just and (the word "yet," is commonly and improperly thrown in here, in quoting the passage,) the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This again, is the only express declaration, so far as we have seen, cited in favor of the belief, that "the influence of the atonement is such, that it has become consistent with justice to do, what would otherwise have been totally inconsistent." Now it never could have been inconsistent with justice for God to be merciful to the believing and penitent, for it is a part of his unalterable nature, and is confirmed by his express promises. Justice withholds favor from the impenitent, not from the penitent. The passage before us authorizes no such opinion as that drawn from it. Quite the opposite. It is the *mercy* of God that is here declared; Christ is shown to be a propitiation, (propitiatory, or mercy-seat,) set forth as a token of the "forbearance of God," manifesting his "righteousness," faithfulness, goodness; that he might be seen to be just or righteous in justifying the believer. It agrees entirely with what, as we have seen, John writes: "If we confess our sins, he is *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins." (1 John i. 9.) We insist, therefore, that neither here, nor in any part of the scriptures, is there an intimation, that it would ever have been unjust in God to pardon the repentant sinner, or "wanton, causeless, and disgraceful to the

This is confining its necessity, and *whole* efficacy to God. (Corner Stone, p. 78—81.)

divine character," to remit sins that are forsaken. These are fearful assertions to be made upon assumption, and ought, at least, to be sustained by sound reasoning.

We will look at another principle in this reasoning; that which asserts that, if not unjust, it is *unsafe* for God to forgive sin on repentance. A great deal is made of this. The writers, on that side, appeal to it with the utmost confidence and with the boldest assertions. They tell us, that to pardon on the simple condition of repentance, would at once subvert God's throne, and fill the earth with anarchy. And what is the proof? This; that such a principle "would break the power of every *human* government on earth."* This is the great argument. Not one writer only, but every writer whom we have consulted, begins and ends with this. Its fallacy seems too obvious, to enter upon a serious exposure. But if it be necessary, we have only to remark, that there is a *difference* between the divine and human governments. The Ruler is different, the object is different, the sanctions and the consequences are all different. Man looketh upon the outward appearance, and his governments are established to regulate the outward conduct. God looketh upon the heart, and the purpose of his administration is to affect the heart. To uphold the community, to protect property and life, is the aim of the one; to purify the soul, and save from the power and condemnation of sin, is the object of the other. It would not be safe for ignorant and fallible men, to pardon offenders on the profession of repentance, — but it is safe for the omniscient *God*, who sees the sincerity of profession, the real-

* Beecher.

ity of reformation. His government cannot be endangered, by encouraging transgressors to *turn* from their transgressions His earth will not be "turned into a hell," by becoming the abode of the penitent and pardoned, the reformed, submissive, obedient, virtuous children of their heavenly Father. No, — that is a different principle, which would introduce anarchy and misery. It is that justice, so called, which confounds the innocent with the guilty. It is that mercy which ordains and accepts the sufferings of the righteous, that the wicked may go free. Let any government proceed upon the principles of imputed guilt and imputed righteousness, substituted punishment and vicarious suffering, we see not how it could endure a day, or to what it would lead but unmingled evil. But while *perfect* justice and perfect love are over us, rendering to every man according to his deeds, we know that the universe is secure. "God reigns, let the earth rejoice."

It is a part of the argument here opposed to us, that all *experience* is against us. Repentance, it is said, does not cancel the past. It does not in this life. Sin may be forsaken, but its consequences go on, and are felt in injured health, and a torturing conscience. True, and a most solemn truth. But it belongs not more to our system, than to the opposite. The consequences of sin must be felt under any system. Let the obdurate offender obtain the assurance of pardon through faith in an atonement, — will *that* cancel the past? Will that restore health at once to a distempered body, or peace to a guilty mind? The peace of a renewed spirit, the peace of reconciliation to God's favor, it may bring; and a blessed peace it is. There is forgiveness, there is positive, instant

joy, to the penitent and believing soul. Every child feels it, when he looks up into his father's face, and sees the smile of pardon and blessing. Every sinner feels it, when he seeks the face of his God, and casts himself, humbly and obediently, on the mediation and promises of his Saviour. Still, the past is not effaced. It cannot be forgotten. It must have its effect, and according to its character and measure, will hasten or retard the coming of perfect peace. We leave others to judge, whether that peace will be most endangered, by the doctrine which insists on speedy repentance and thorough reformation,— or that which makes these of less consequence than an act of faith.

It is objected, yet again, to our view of pardon on repentance, that it makes salvation a matter of personal attainment, and begets a feeling of self-righteousness and merit. We disclaim all such feeling. The thought of claiming or meriting salvation, seems to us an absurdity, insanity. We know of no doctrine that favors it in the least, except the old doctrine of literal exact satisfaction, whose advocates sometimes represented salvation as *due*, the full price having been paid for it by Christ's sufferings. We regard salvation as a free gift, unmerited, unpurchased. Repentance and obedience are, not grounds of claim, but simply *conditions*. And by conditions we mean no more, than is meant when it is said that *faith* is a condition of salvation; *i. e.* it is essential, it is one of the appointed means. And faith, be it observed, may become a ground of claim, or beget a feeling of merit, as easily as repentance. The man who believes in a sacrifice for sin, and looks for salvation in consequence of that

belief, relies as much on his own act, as the man who hopes to obtain salvation in the way of repentance and obedience.

We have now noticed all the important objections to our views of forgiveness. We could bring many objections, ourselves, to the common doctrine. Besides being without support in scripture and reason, it involves self-contradictions. It demands an infinite expiation, but allows that Christ died only in his finite nature. It stands upon a literal ransom, and yet pays that ransom to God, instead of the being from whom we are to be delivered, and to whom the price was once said to be paid.* It makes sin an infinite evil, because committed against an infinite Being; but denies that all sins are equal, as they must be if each is infinite, and denies also that virtue is an infinite good, though exercised toward the same infinite Being. It declares that even the atonement secures salvation to no one unconditionally, or without repentance and obedience; and still denies that repentance and obedience are conditions of salvation. It says, as in the articles of the Church of England, "the offering of Christ is a perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual," and yet supposes that the sins of very few are remitted, and that of the free gift and grace of God, though the debt is paid and justice *satisfied*. It ascribes to God the lowest kind of human justice, that which exacts all that is due without regard to the disposition or prayer of the

* A ransom given to the *devil*, was one form of the old doctrine. (Murdock's Dogmatic History, p. 78.)

debtor, and executes the law to its utmost rigor, although the purposes of the law may be already answered. And after all, this doctrine is liable to the heavy charge, brought by one of its own advocates against a limited atonement. "How is justice satisfied in it, when neither party has what is due to his character? Christ received sufferings which he never deserved, and the sinner receives blessings which were never due to his character." *

The radical error of the common doctrine is, that it regards the atonement as "an expedient" to relieve the Almighty from a conflict in his attributes, an "emergency" in his government. The necessity of it is drawn from his own nature and condition, more than from the condition of man; and its application and efficacy are viewed in connexion with the infinite Sovereign, far more than in connexion with the dependent subject. The direct object of the atonement, according to this view, is to magnify the law, not to secure obedience to the law. Nor is the law supposed to be magnified or satisfied, when its design is answered or obedience to it secured, in any other way. This way itself, and the law itself, are the primary, paramount objects; not means, but ends. Obedience is not regarded as the end. Salvation is not made the chief end. We would not say this without authority. Most of the advocates of this doctrine imply it; many avow it in terms not only explicit but painful. The writer whom we last quoted thus expresses it, — "It should be remembered, that the salvation of offenders is not the chief end of an atonement, but the glory of *God's public*

* Jenkyn on Atonement.

character. The atonement does this, even *if not one soul were saved*." * This is dreadful. Observe the words which we have marked, — can you read them without a thrill of horror? The whole Bible, the whole creation, our natures, bad as they may be, our souls, however dead, revolt at such a statement. Our brethren who differ from us, will revolt at it, we believe, when thus nakedly presented. But is it an exaggeration? Does not their faith, when consistently carried out in clear words, go to this length? We hope it does not, but we fear. The idea itself seems to us to pervade all those peculiar systems. They are not peculiar, they differ little or none from our own, if they do not proceed upon the necessity of some *change* in the character or power of God, before he can be merciful to any one. Such a change, though denied in words now, is still constantly implied, and indeed required to make sense. What less is asserted, in these few but remarkable words of Dr. Wayland, though in a discourse on the Moral Efficacy of the Atonement. "The throne of God is now a mercy seat." † "Now," that is, under the gospel, through the sacrifice already made for sin. The throne of God is *now* a mercy seat. What was it before? Is mercy a new attribute of the Deity? If the most enlightened and pious defenders of this system thus speak of it, there must be something lamentably defective in its very foundation.

* Jenkyn. — We quote this author without reference to the page, no reference being made in the N. Y. Evangelist, which has given nearly all the book, and on which we have relied.

† Wayland's Discourses, p. 178.

There is a truer foundation, we are persuaded, upholding a better doctrine, more scriptural, more rational, more honorable to God and useful to man. There is a juster and nobler view, based upon that cardinal truth, which we are glad to write in the words of an eminent Calvinist, "God is never just without being merciful, nor merciful without being just."* This view is substantially that which we have aimed to set forth in these pages. It is a view unspeakably precious to us. We may not hold it without error, for we are human. We may not be able to present it as it appears to us, or as it should be presented. But we do prize it. We cling to it with a confidence and joy, which God only can take from us, for God has given it. We cling to it the more earnestly, because it so mingles justice with mercy, and fear with love, as to comprise all dissuasives from evil, as well as all encouragements to good. It checks and awes presumption, by the same power with which it wins confidence and allegiance. To the rebel it is terrible, to the obedient child it is delightful. The sinner who contemplates it in all its truth and just consequences, must quake; the penitent believer, who casts himself on its promise of mercy, rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And this view, so solemn, yet so cheering, is not afar off. It is very nigh unto us. We read it wherever we read of God, and no where more brightly or graciously than in the death of his Son. We see there its truth, we feel its power. We see it in all revelation, in all right reason. It conflicts with no other truth, it opposes no divine attribute, no human interest. It is in harmony with all that

* Wardlaw's Discourses, p. 198.

we know of God, it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, it speaks with thrilling power to the soul of man, — speaks of the enormous guilt and misery of sin, of the absolute necessity of repentance and holiness, of the poverty of man's best services, and the riches of God's unmerited, unpurchased grace; who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We have given, as we were able, our views of divine truth on this momentous subject. We have remarked upon other views, freely, but we hope not uncharitably, Let us not leave the impression that there is no *concord* between our own and other views. Let it not be thought, that we see nothing to approve in any system but our own. Let the reader bear with us a moment longer, while we express distinctly the great principle on which our faith rests, and ask if the same principle be not held and valued by Christians of every name. What is it?

"God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." —"God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." — "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

These passages express all that we desire. There is the cause of this gracious interposition; we were "sinners." There is the motive which prompted this interposition; God so "loved" us. There is the medium by which his love is manifested; Christ "died for us." There is the purpose, and the way in which it is to be accomplished;

turning away every one of you "from his iniquities." And there is the end, for which God thus interposed, for which Christ lived and died; to "bring us to God." Does any one ask still, — *how* bring us to God? The scriptures still answer, "by putting away *sin;*" by "purging the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." And that is the principle on which we stand.

We ask, now, does not every Christian in the world believe, that this is the great purpose of all that God and Christ have done, and this the way, the only practical way, in which that purpose is to be accomplished?* Is not SIN the mighty and only evil? Is it not the sole obstacle to the favor of God and the salvation that is in Christ? Must not sin be taken away? Can it be taken away without *repentance?* Is not repentance essential? Is not obedience essential? Can a soul be saved without them? Can a soul be lost with them? Are they not the conditions, we mean not the causes, but the *conditions* of salvation, through the free grace of God in Jesus Christ? Will he ever forget these conditions, or spurn the soul that strives to observe them? Will God ever turn away from him, who comes to him with the trembling confession, "Father, I have sinned," — "I repent," — "God be merciful to me a sinner?" To these questions, we believe our Trinitarian brethren would all reply as we do. We exhort to repentance and obedience. So do they. We assure the penitent and obedient of God's mercy. So do they. We renounce all sufficiency of ourselves, all thought of human merit, all possibility of claim. So do they. We preach that unless men are

* Dr. Chalmers, in a very recent discourse, says — "*The purpose of Christ's death, is only to stimulate our obedience.*"

turned from their sins, Christ died in vain for them. So do they. We believe all form and faith are vain, all preaching and hearing vain, except so far as they humble the sinner, purify his heart, inspire him with love to God, and bring his life into obedience to the truth as it is in Jesus. This, too, others believe as strongly as we. True, many think this humility and obedience would not, could not, have saved the sinner, had not Christ satisfied justice, and made such forgiveness consistent and safe. But this, they think, he has done. So that now, they say with us, God can and does forgive the penitent believer. Supposing the past then to have been as they assert, the only important difference that at present remains, is that they may believe nothing will produce penitence, nothing *can* humble the soul, but faith in an infinite expiation, a literal sacrifice for sin.

Can they believe this? Can they venture to assert, that no doctrine but this, in their particular view of it, ever has produced, or ever can produce, repentance? Will they shut out or deny the influence of all other doctrines, the power of other views of the gospel? The birth of Christ, the perfect excellence of his character, the energy of his sublime truth, the motives he pressed, the sanctions he unfolded, the sufferings he endured, the death to which he submitted, his love stronger than death, his expiring prayer, his mingled agony, fortitude and forgiveness, his resistless triumph, his glorious resurrection, his serene ascension to his Father and our Father, his God and our God, his intercession on high, and all the gracious influences imparted and promised, all the ordinances and means given us, — have not these power to loosen the thraldom of passion, to dispel the mists of ignorance and

doubt, to wake from the sleep of sin and death, to turn us from iniquity and bring us to God? They *have* power. Their power is felt by thousands. Thanks be to God, they can win souls to Christ They can act by fear or love, upon the heart of the believer and the scoffer. They can pierce the conscience of the sinner, and renew the strength of the fainting disciple. They can strike upon the soul, as by the power of God, and break its iron hardness, search its secret depths, warm its coldest recesses, and illumine its heaviest darkness. This they are designed to do,—this, many will testify on earth and in Heaven, they have done. Especially has the death of Christ this power,—his blood, his CROSS. For *there* is seen, most of all, the love of Him who first loved us, and the love of Him who gave himself for us. There is seen the frightful power of sin, its odiousness and baseness, God's abhorrence and condemnation of it, yet the plenteousness of his mercy in thus providing for our deliverance from sin. There too is the confirmation of promise, the fulfilment of prophecy, the majesty of truth, the victory of faith. There, above all, is the seal of Christianity. Yes, there is the blood of the Son of God, sealing, for those who mocked and crucified him, a covenant of grace and love. We see the death of the Prince of life; and not his death only, but his triumph over the grave. He is risen, ascended, glorified, exalted to the right hand of God, made perfect through sufferings, and bringing many sons to glory.

THUS is "God, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "*To this end*, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, *that he might be Lord both of the dead and*

living," "Thus," we hear him say in that last solemn hour, with the seal of death and the resurrection on his opening lips, just as he was entering into his glory,— "*Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that* REPENTANCE *and* REMISSION OF SINS *should be preached in his name among all nations.*"

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VINDICATED AGAINST THE CHARGE

OF

SKEPTICAL TENDENCIES.

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UNITARIANISM VINDICATED.

MEN may take their religion on trust, or make it a matter of inquiry and rational conviction. Unitarians prefer and adopt the latter course; holding it to be their privilege and duty to do so, and essential to consistent Protestantism. With them it is not enough that the church has decided in favor of a particular doctrine; or that the doctrine belongs to the religion established by law; or that it was held by their ancestors, and is still held by the majority. On the infinitely important subject of religion, and with the Bible in their hands, they do not feel themselves at liberty to waive the right to read for themselves, and judge for themselves. One of the consequences of acting on this principle is, as might be expected, that they come to some conclusions differing materially from those commonly received; and also that they do not agree exactly with one another; nor the same man with himself at different times, for of course as he

continues his inquiries he may receive more light. This circumstance, however, has afforded occasion for one of the most common and serious objections urged against them. Their way of proceeding, it is said, has a tendency to unsettle men's minds, and introduce a general skepticism; and the whole system has been branded as the half-way house to infidelity.

We propose to take up this single charge, and give it a careful and thorough examination. After a few preliminary remarks on the nature of faith, and the history and present state of the particular question at issue, we shall be prepared to demonstrate, that there is nothing in Unitarianism itself, nor in its rejection of certain popular doctrines, nor in the general manner in which it has been, or is, defended and maintained, to warrant the suspicions and imputations just named.

It does not follow necessarily that a man believes a particular doctrine, merely because he thinks he does; for he may be mistaken in regard to this fact, as well as in regard to any other. To know whether we believe a particular doctrine, we must know, in the first place, what the doctrine is; in the second place, we must know what our own ideas on the subject really are; and in the third place, we must compare the doctrine and our own ideas together, and see whether they agree. Now we hazard nothing in saying, that many never think of going through this process; and those who undertake it, are liable to mistake at every step, and of course may be mistaken in the conclusion. The truth is,—and why should men try or affect not to see it?—most persons adopt the religious phraseology which happens to prevail where they are brought up; and as they do this in early childhood, they

do it before they can be expected to use such phraseology understandingly, and a habit of using it vaguely and mechanically is formed and perpetuated. It is no sufficient evidence, therefore, that a man believes the popular doctrines in religion, merely because he uses the popular language; for he may use this language in a different or qualified sense, or, which is still more probable, he may use it in no determinate sense. As a general rule, indeed, we suspect that conversions to Unitarianism, especially when they take place among serious and devout people, do not imply any material change in their convictions, but only that they have ascertained what their real convictions are, and are not restrained by considerations either of interest or fear from avowing them.

Again, it does not follow necessarily, that a man believes a particular doctrine, merely because he wishes he did, and is willing to take it for granted. It may be for his interest to believe; he may be persuaded or frightened into the opinion that he ought to believe; he may honestly think that believing would make him a better man; but, after all, he cannot believe, until he is convinced. Faith is not a simple act of the will; nor can it be strengthened or weakened, or changed or in any way modified, by a simple act of the will. It is the involuntary yielding of the mind to a preponderance of evidence as it strikes us at the time. True, in some states of mind we are much more likely to believe, than in others; but it is because in different states of mind the same evidence strikes us differently, being viewed under different aspects; and not because the will, simply considered, has any control over our convictions. In all cases without exception, let our state of mind be what it may, belief is the invol-

untary assent of the understanding to a preponderance of evidence, as it strikes us at the time. It does depend on a man's will what professions he shall make, and what church he shall attend, and what party he shall connect himself with; and he may take every thing he hears for granted, if he pleases, and he may reason, and to a certain extent he may act on it, as if it were true; — but what has this to do with real belief? He may wish to believe; he may try to believe; he may say he believes; still, however, it is not belief, in any proper sense of that word, unless he is convinced. It resembles much more nearly what children call "making believe." For fashion's sake, for interest's sake, for peace' sake, perhaps for conscience' sake he may make believe; but this is the utmost he can do, until he is convinced.

Further; it is idle to think of believing a proposition, the terms of which we do not and cannot understand. A man may believe, perhaps, that a proposition, unintelligible to himself, is nevertheless true; but this is not believing the proposition itself, but only in the authority of the proposition. A man may believe, perhaps, that a truth is asserted in such a proposition; but this is not believing the truth asserted, but only that a truth is asserted. To believe a proposition is to believe what is asserted in the proposition; but, before we can believe what is asserted in the proposition, we must know what is asserted. If we do not know what is asserted in a proposition, how do we know, how can we know, but that we believe exactly the contrary? A man's real belief on any subject is neither more nor less than his ideas on that subject. Set before him, then, an unintelligible proposition, and we should like to be informed, how he is to tell

whether his ideas agree with it, or not; and on the supposition that they do not, we should like to be informed, how he is to proceed in order to make them agree. The mysteries of the New Testament are not unintelligible propositions, but secrets, hidden, it is true, from the foundation of the world until they were disclosed by Jesus Christ, and his apostles, but now that they are disclosed, as intelligible as any other truths. There are also mysteries in nature, mysteries as yet undisclosed; but these are not unintelligible propositions, nor propositions of any kind, but ultimate facts, beyond which, at present, we cannot go either in our reasonings or conceptions. What abuse of language, therefore, as well as confusion of ideas, is implied in thinking to believe ourselves, or to make others believe, unintelligible propositions under the name of mysteries, awful mysteries? And yet how much effect this cry of mystery, awful mystery, has had in inducing men to suppose that they believed, merely because they were afraid to inquire. After the advocates of error have been driven from every other position, they have always been able to turn round on their pursuers, and raise the cry of mystery, awful mystery; and the strongest minds have been daunted, and withdrawn their objections as presumptuous and irreverent, and acquiesced in absurdities and superstitions, which they had again and again refuted. In following back the history of our religion we are reminded, at almost every step, of the inscription on the forehead of the woman in the Apocalypse, who prefigured the abuses and corruptions in the church: "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

But the days of mystery and concealment are passing

away; for men have learned from the Scriptures themselves to prove all things, and hold fast that only which is good. There are those who are alarmed at this; but the man who fears that inquiry will make him a skeptic, shows himself a skeptic already. All interferences to repress freedom of thought, all attempts to deter men from hearing and reading on both sides, all appeals to the fears and prejudices of the people to prevent a free and open discussion of novel opinions, originate in that very skepticism, which they are vainly thought to preclude. It is the policy of men, whatever they may say to the contrary, who have no confidence in their own cause, and therefore dread, above all things, the inquisitive and searching spirit which is trying the systems and institutions of the world, as by fire. Some will contend, we are aware, that they have no objection to a free discussion of religious subjects, provided it is confined to the privileged and well educated classes; but the people, the common people must be kept at a distance, at all events, and not be suffered to break through the gaze. You cannot do it. The distinction of modern times does not consist so much in a greater advancement of knowledge, as in a greater diffusion of knowledge; and the consequence is, not that the few are less inclined to impose on the many than formerly, but that the many have become acquainted with their rights and powers, and will not permit it. If ignorance is the mother of devotion in the common people, you have committed a fatal error in allowing education to become general; but the light has gone forth, and you cannot recall it, and those who have learned to think for themselves on other subjects, will think for themselves on the subject of religion. It is a full century too late for

timid expedients and half-way measures, and the discussion of all subjects literary and moral, political and religious, must be free, free as the air, and while free, safe, for in the world of mind, as of matter, it is repression only which produces violence.*

We are now prepared to inquire whether there is any thing in Unitarianism itself to unsettle men's minds, and introduce a general skepticism.

The distinction between the Unitarian and the Trinitarian is not, that the former thinks himself supported by reason, and the latter by Scripture. Each thinks himself supported by Scripture, and the only difference in this connection is, that the Unitarian thinks himself supported

* "The universal education of the poor, which no earthly power can prevent, although it may retard it, is loudly demanded by the united voices of the moralist and politician. But if the people are to be enlightened at all, it is unavailing and inconsistent to resort to half measures and timid expedients; to treat them at once as men and as children; to endow them with the power of thinking, and at the same time to fetter its exercise; to make an appeal to their reason, and yet to distrust its decisions; to give them the stomach of a lion, and feed them with the aliment of a lamb. The promoters of the universal education of the poor ought to be aware that they are setting in motion, or at least accelerating the action of an engine too powerful to be controlled at their pleasure, and likely to prove fatal to all those parts of their own systems, which rest not on the solid foundation of reality. They ought to know, that they are necessarily giving birth to a great deal of doubt and investigation; that they are undermining the power of prejudice, and the influence of mere authority and prescription; that they are creating an immense number of keen inquirers and original thinkers, whose intellectual force will be turned, in the first instance, upon subjects which are dearest to the heart, and of most importance to society." *Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions.* pp. 150, 151.

by reason too. Besides, it must be conceded, on all hands, that Christianity, as represented by Unitarians, is made to appear more reasonable and probable in itself, while nothing is done to detract in the smallest degree from its historical evidences. Open any popular work on the evidences, Paley's, for example, and you cannot turn to a single important argument, illustration, or allusion, which the Unitarian may not urge with just as much confidence in proof of Christianity, as he understands it, as the Trinitarian can in proof of Christianity, as he understands it. The question here is not, how strong this evidence is, or how much it will prove, or whether it will prove any thing; but we say, that it will prove as much for the Unitarian as it will for the Trinitarian. This, then, is a true statement of the case; Unitarian views are sustained by the same evidence and authority with the Trinitarian, and the only difference is, that Unitarian views are more reasonable and probable in themselves. Now we ask, whether a man is less likely to believe in Christianity merely because it is made to appear more reasonable and probable in itself, the evidence and authority for it remaining the same? Take any system or theory, and make it appear more reasonable and probable in itself, and can it be supposed for one moment that it will require more external evidence to convince men of its truth? or that the same external evidence will not produce in them an equal degree of conviction? We neither judge nor despise those who believe or profess to believe in apparent contradictions or incongruities; for they have a right to do so, and they ought to do so, if they think these apparent contradictions or incongruities part of divine revelation. But we are speak-

ing of those who are honestly convinced, that these apparent contradictions or incongruities are not part of divine revelation, are not taught in the Bible. Taking this view of the subject, we can hardly look on a man as serious, who still persists in maintaining, that one's faith in Christianity is less likely to be hearty and entire, merely because it comes to him supported at the same time by Scripture, and reason, and conscience, and his best feelings, and all nature.

This is one of those questions, a fair, clear, and forcible statement of which makes all discussion superfluous. Besides, it is not enough considered, in this connexion, that the external evidences of Christianity are of a moral or historical nature, and do not therefore, and cannot amount to demonstration. So long as the intrinsic improbability of what is to be proved falls within a certain limit, these evidences are sufficient; but they cease to be sufficient as soon as the intrinsic improbability of what is to be proved is made to exceed this limit. The impartial and discriminating inquirer will take care, at every step, to weigh the external evidences of what is to be proved against its intrinsic improbability, and the balance, one way or the other, will be the measure of his faith, or of his skepticism. To make Christianity, therefore, appear more reasonable and probable in itself, has the same effect, so far as a rational conviction of its truth is concerned, as adding so much to its external evidences, and to make it appear less reasonable and probable in itself, has the same effect as detracting so much from its external evidences. It is folly, moreover, to shut our eyes on the fact, that in all educated and enlightened communities, the traditionary faith is gradually losing its hold on the public mind. Tempo-

rary alarms and excitements may do something to counteract this tendency; but that it exists, and is felt, is manifest in the feverish eagerness evinced of late by most even of the exclusive sects in altering their policy, and, in some respects, their doctrines and institutions, to accommodate themselves to it. Once the apparent inconsistencies and absurdities in the popular faith constituted no obstacle to its prevalence as matter of profession at least, if not of actual belief; but the time is coming, and in many places now is, when with men of intelligence and reflection the only question likely to arise is, whether they shall have a more rational religion, or none. Among every people there must be a certain correspondence and harmony, if we may so express it, between the religion as publicly professed and taught, and their moral and intellectual progress in other respects, or a spirit of indifference or disgust will grow up in regard to it, a thousand times more fatal to every thing like a true and living faith, than speculative doubts. In proof of this we need but refer to the state of things in England during the Protectorate and the reign of Charles the Second, and in France for some time prior to the Revolution, and in some parts of Germany at the present moment. Unitarianism, therefore, nominally or virtually held, in a free and enlightened community like ours, instead of opening on us, as some would pretend, the floodgates of infidelity, presents under God, as we conceive, the only effectual barrier against its encroachments.

Admitting, however, that there is nothing in Unitarianism itself to induce skepticism, the question arises whether it does not omit or reject certain principles or doctrines, which lie at the foundation of an unshaken trust in revelation.

In the first place, Unitarians entertain different views from those which have prevailed in some sects respecting what is called "the witness of the spirit." Paul, writing to the Romans, says, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself," or, as it ought to be rendered, this very spirit, "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."* The meaning of the original may be rendered more fully and intelligibly thus: "Ye have not again received the spirit of slaves, which is fear, but the spirit of adopted sons, by which we appeal to God, as our Father. This very spirit, if we are conscious of possessing it, bears witness with our spirit, affords us the necessary evidence, that we are the children of God." The Scriptures neither here, nor in any other passage, countenance the presumption, that to be a Christian, and a believer in the truth, it is necessary for a man to be assured of the fact by some mysterious and preternatural intimation from above. At the same time, it is not wonderful, that persons acting under a belief that such an intimation was to be expected, especially if they are of an excitable and imaginative temperament, should often work themselves into an impression that they have received it. Accordingly we find that Deists and Mahomedans, as well as Christians, and that Christians of different denominations, and of irreconcilable and contradictory views, have supposed themselves to receive mysterious and preternatural intimations from God, sometimes externally and sometimes internally, each one of the correctness of his own peculiar sentiments, and of

* Romans viii. 15, 16.

the safety of his own condition. Nay, the same individual will sometimes alter his religious opinions and practices three or four times in the course of his life, and yet declare and honestly believe, after each change, that he has had mysterious and preternatural assurances that he is infallibly right at last. Shall we say, then, that all these pretences to infallibility and divine illumination are well founded? Certainly not; for this would be to make God expressly confirm and sanction all manner of contradictions. Besides, if we go over to the Quaker, because he is confident that he is right from divine intimations, as he regards them, then also, and for the same reason, to be consistent, we must go over to the Methodist, and the high Calvinist, and the Swedenborgian, each of whom is not a whit less confident than the Quaker, that he too is right, from divine intimations, as he regards them. The argument, by proving too much, proves nothing.

Still it may be argued that these supposed divine intimations, however they may be regarded by others, must exclude all doubt from those who are conscious of them. Conscious of what? They are conscious, doubtless, of certain internal impressions, emotions, or suggestions; and of the fact of these internal impressions, emotions, or suggestions, consciousness is, we admit, an infallible witness. But that these internal impressions, emotions, or suggestions are from God is not a matter of consciousness, but of inference, and perhaps, as they must know, of mistaken inference. If, therefore, while relying on supposed divine intimations, I see my neighbors, by trusting to the same kind of evidence, led into conclusions the very opposite to mine, must I not, if I am a man of discernment and reflection, begin to suspect the evidence itself?

If I see multitudes around me, whose honesty and sincerity I cannot question, misled by a confidence in supposed divine intimations, may I not, must I not, begin to suspect that I also may be misled in the same way? I cannot doubt, it is true, the reality of those impressions, emotions, or suggestions, of which I am conscious; but I can alter my mind respecting their nature and origin. Impressions, emotions, or suggestions, which I used to regard as mysterious and preternatural intimations from above, I may find can be explained on a different hypothesis, and more satisfactorily. It is not true, therefore, that a consciousness of supposed divine intimations and assurances will exclude doubt; for this consciousness must always be accompanied by another, that in regard to the first we may be self-deceived. The very same reasons and arguments, which, as we have shown, should lead a man who makes no pretensions to mysterious and preternatural intimations, to suspect those who do, should also lead those who do not suspect themselves. Hence it appears that Unitarians lose nothing on the score either of evidence, or argument, or confidence, by rejecting as unscriptural and illusory the popular doctrine of the witness of the spirit.

Again; it may be alleged that Unitarians throw every thing into uncertainty by the peculiar views which they hold and inculcate respecting inspiration. Unitarians believe in the divine origin of the Christian religion, and in its supernatural and miraculous origin. They believe that our Lord and his apostles were inspired, — supernaturally, miraculously inspired. Accordingly they conclude, and cannot but conclude, that the writers of the New Testament, possessing such means of information, must

have carried in their minds at all times, in all places, and to the end of life, a true, living and unfailing knowledge of the doctrine of Christ. They make a distinction, however, between being inspired and being omniscient, holding that the inspiration of the most favored of these writers extended only to what is essential to the Christian doctrine. Their inspiration began and ended in a supernatural communication to their minds of a clear, abiding, and infallible preception of the vital and essential principles of the new dispensation. These they were afterwards left to state, illustrate, and recommend, as they were able, in their own language, and by their natural faculties. Unitarians do not think it necessary to maintain, nor safe to attempt to maintain, that the sacred writers were inspired as natural philosophers, metaphysicians, or critics, nor even as logicians, chronologers, or historians. They distinguish, moreover, between the Christian revelation, which existed, and had been extensively diffused many years before a line of the Christian Scriptures was written, and these Scriptures themselves, which are but a record of the revelation. And here we cannot but express our surprise and regret at the ignorance, or want of candor, or profligacy of those, who take every opportunity to affirm or insinuate that Unitarians do not believe in inspiration, or in the Bible as containing the Christian revelation, or that their views on these and the kindred subjects are essentially novel or peculiar. They are substantially the same views with those held by Grotius and Le Clerc, by Paley and the liberal divines generally of the Church of England, and by almost the entire body of German theologians at the present day, the professed Rationalists excepted. "Had the Deity," says Michaelis, "inspired not

a single book of the New Testament, but left the apostles and evangelists without any other aid than that of natural abilities to commit what they knew to writing, admitting their works to be authentic, and possessed of a sufficient degree of credibility, the Christian religion would still remain the true one."* Upon which Bishop Marsh remarks, "Here our author makes a distinction, which is at present very generally received, between the divine origin of the Christian doctrine, and the divine origin of the writings in which that doctrine is recorded."†

It is remarkable that the views of inspiration entertained by Unitarians, in common, it is believed, with the majority of enlightened Protestants, and which have exposed them in some quarters to the suspicion of skepticism, have been insisted on for the sole purpose of meeting the objections of infidels. They are under no necessity, and they feel no disposition, in their controversies with other Christians, to avail themselves of any latitude of interpretation, which these views of inspiration might be supposed to warrant, in ascertaining what is to be received as the simple, unadulterated truth. In their controversies with Trinitarians and Calvinists, for example, even if it were assumed, on both sides, that every word and letter, nay the very punctuation, of canonical and genuine Scripture were inspired, it would not in their minds vary the result. But on subjects not connected with the Christian doctrine, or merely collateral and unessential, discrepancies and contradictions occur in the sacred writings which never have been reconciled by a fair and legitimate construction, and never can be. It is necessary, therefore, either to adopt views of inspiration which are consistent with

* Marsh's Michaelis, Vol. I. p. 72. † Ib. p. 379.

such discrepancies and contradictions, or give up inspiration altogether. Some persons appear to think and reason as if by embracing the extreme doctrine of a plenary inspiration, something is gained to the argument for the truth of Christianity. A moment's reflection, however, must be sufficient, it would seem, to convince every one, that its effect, on the contrary, must be merely to embarrass that argument, and, in our opinion, fatally. After taking this ground it is not sufficient, as with us, to establish the general truth and authority of the Scriptures; but even the minutest inaccuracy in history or philosophy to be found in them will be fastened on by the skeptic and the infidel, and becomes an insuperable objection. The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that those who can believe in the Bible, holding at the same time the extreme doctrine of a plenary inspiration, would believe in it with infinitely less misgiving, if they felt themselves at liberty to adopt the modified form of that doctrine as held by Unitarians, and rational Christians generally. Waiving, as we purposely do in this place, the question of the correctness of Unitarian views of inspiration, and their accordance with Scripture, and considering them merely in their connection with the evidences of Christianity, and in their bearing on faith, it is obvious, that, instead of promoting, they must have a tendency to prevent or arrest a spirit of skepticism in those who hold them, and in the community.

There is, then, nothing peculiar to Unitarianism, either in what it admits or in what it rejects, which can be justly suspected of skeptical or infidel tendencies. We shall next inquire, as proposed, whether the whole system has become justly liable to a suspicion of this nature from the

manner in which it is arrived at, or in which it has been, and is, defended and maintained.

Exceptions have been taken to the extent to which Unitarians have carried their rejection of human authority, as such, in matters of faith and conscience. The radical mistake committed by those who are for ever hovering round this objection, consists in supposing that authority can exclude doubt, after doubts have arisen respecting the authority. The freedom, and in some instances the licentiousness of thought which has shown itself in modern times, has not had its origin, as some seem to imagine, in policy, or in an experiment, or in a particular inculcation, but has grown necessarily out of the progress of society and the human mind. It is idle to expect that the people, if allowed and encouraged to inquire freely on all other subjects, will long permit themselves to be hoodwinked and bound on the subject of religion. Accustomed to ask a reason for every thing else, they will ask a reason for the authority which any man, or any body of men may arrogate in matters of faith; and in this way doubts will arise respecting the authority itself, and these doubts will extend themselves, of course, to every thing resting on this authority. They may still, it is true, profess an outward respect for the authority in question, and agree to appeal to it as of final jurisdiction in order to have some means of settling or preventing controversies; but their faith is gone. It is remarkable that in the church which makes the greatest pretensions to authority, and on the whole with the best show of reason, and in countries, too, where this authority has been enforced with every advantage to be derived either from government or public opinion, skepticism and infidelity have made the most alarm-

ing inroads. Among Protestants, too, the utter inefficacy of mere authority to foreclose skeptical and infidel tendencies is manifest in the case of German anti-supernaturalism, which has arisen and grown up under an outward respect and conformity to the most orthodox creeds and establishments. All that authority can do in matters of faith, is to introduce the old distinction between esoterics and exoterics, to make it necessary for men to think with the wise and talk with the vulgar; a state of things much more likely, especially in a country like ours, to root out every vestige of a sincere and honest belief, than the most reckless spirit of innovation.

Besides, much of the skepticism which is sometimes referred to the public and free discussion of religious subjects, does not originate in these discussions, but is only brought to light by them. There is a latent and passive skepticism much more widely diffused in the community than is generally supposed, which, in our judgment, is to the full as culpable in itself, and as injurious in its moral influences, as an open and active skepticism, and much more difficult to cure. We should not regard it as an evil, therefore, even if it could be proved that the discussions provoked by Unitarianism have made some men sensible to their doubts, and disposed in some instances to avow and defend them; for it is not until their skepticism has put on this form, that it can be fairly met either by themselves or others. If we must have an active or a passive skepticism, give us the first. An active skepticism will often cure itself, work itself clear of its difficulties; but there is no hope whatever of a man who will neither believe nor inquire. An active skepticism, moreover, does not imply an indifference to truth, nor prevent

men from discriminating; so that while it leads them to deny this thing, and doubt that, it leaves their confidence in other things unimpaired, and perhaps strengthened and quickened. But it is of the nature of a latent and passive skepticism, by confounding the true with the false, and the certain with the doubtful, to spread itself gradually over the whole subject, involving natural as well as revealed religion in the same doubt, and causing them to be regarded with a like indifference, if not contempt. Under the influence of this spirit the best that men can be expected to do, is to settle down at last into the conceited and supercilious conclusion, that Christianity, whether true or not, is a good thing for society, and especially for the lower classes, and must not be disturbed. We know of nothing more likely to move an ingenuous mind to indignation, than to see one who from indolence or indifference is secretly skeptical as to all religion, joining, however, in the vulgar cry of heresy or infidelity against those who will not assent to what neither he nor they believe. We can bear with the opposition, and even with the personal abuse of the bigot and the fanatic, for they are honest, or at least consistent; but we find it more difficult to command our feelings, when worldly, intriguing, hollow-hearted men array themselves against reform, and affect a concern for prejudices and antiquated errors, which in their hearts they despise.

Again, it has been said, that in most communities, to arrive at Unitarianism, men must give up many of the doctrines in which they were educated, and that the giving up of each of these doctrines must weaken their confidence in those which they retain. It is obvious, in the first place, that this objection does not apply to Unitari-

anism in any other sense than it does to every reformation, and particularly to the Protestant reformation. Besides, it proceeds in this case on a forgetfulness of the important circumstances insisted on above, that the doctrines discarded by Unitarians were a dead weight on the whole system, and of course that the system, thus relieved, must meet with a more ready and entire assent. We are willing, nevertheless, to admit that men's confidence in simple and pure Christianity must be most perfect in those cases, in which in order to arrive at it they are not obliged to reject any human additions or corruptions with which it has been connected. From this, however, our only inference is, not that men should not be instructed in Unitarianism, but that they should never be instructed in any thing else. If a certain degree of skepticism always adheres to a mind which is conscious of having been once imposed upon and abused, the whole blame of the skepticism should certainly be thrown back on the imposition and abuse, in which it originated. If innovation in itself considered be an evil, especially in religion, the evil should be referred not to Unitarianism, but to the false views in which the people have been educated, and which in the general advancement of knowledge make innovation unavoidable. So far, too, as the charge of having actually innovated on the faith of our ancestors is concerned, it is obvious that the Orthodox of the present day, in New England certainly, are in the same condemnation. If any say, that they have not given up doctrines which they themselves deem essential and fundamental, it should be recollected that we also can say as much; for neither have we given up doctrines, which we ourselves deem essential and fundamental. If they say, on the other hand,

that they have not given up doctrines deemed essential and fundamental by the first reformers, the Puritans, and their own immediate ancestors, they say what is not true. By rejecting, as they have done almost unanimously, the doctrines of imputation and particular election, for example, they have already innovated as essentially on the traditionary faith, as they would do if they were to go further, and reject the doctrine of the trinity itself.

We prefer, however, to meet this charge of innovation on its own merits. Why should it be thought necessary to defend ourselves against the imputation or suspicion of skeptical or infidel tendencies, merely because we have departed from some of the doctrines held by the first reformers? The progress of society and the human mind did not stop with their labors. On the contrary, there has never been a period in the history of man, during which this progress has been so rapid and perceptible as during the last three centuries. We see it in every thing;—in the disappearance of a thousand weak and debasing superstitions; in the repeal of many useless, oppressive, and sanguinary laws; in the great improvements which have obtained in education; in the prevalence of a more liberal spirit on all subjects, and in the resistance felt and manifested against every form of usurpation and tyranny. Nor does this progress appear in any thing more than in those sciences necessary to the critical understanding of the Scriptures, and the effectual exposure of the pretences of false religions. Now, are we to believe, can it be imagined, that society and the human mind have been advancing for three long centuries, with unparalleled rapidity, in every thing else but religion, and even in the means of advancement in religion, and

yet that in religion itself, they have not advanced a single step? Possessing the same natural powers with the first reformers, and all the advantages which they had, and many more besides,—entering, as it were, on their labors, and beginning where they left off, is it to be believed, can it be imagined, that the pious, the learned, and the inquisitive, for three long centuries, have not been able to go forward a single step? The Protestant reformation grew out of the progress of society, and the human mind, and this progress has been continually going on. Assign, then, if you can, a single earthly reason possessing even the poor merit of being merely plausible, why this reformation should not go on with its cause. The first reformers were but men, and acted as other men would have acted in the same circumstances Is it probable then we would ask,—nay, is it possible, that mere men, uninspired men, who had but just broken away from the most degrading prejudices and superstitions, and who still thought, reasoned, and acted under circumstances the most unfavorable of all to cool and impartial deliberation, —is it possible, that such men, in the hurry and passion of a great moral revolution, could strike out at a single blow a difficult and complicated system, which in all after time would neither require revision, nor admit of correction?

At the same time, we would not be understood to speak disparagingly of the claims which the first reformers have on our respect and gratitude. They certainly possessed many noble qualities, and we would honor these qualities; nay more, we would imitate them. Yes, who are the men that imitate the first reformers? — that strength and independence of mind, by which they broke away from the

prejudices of education; that noble daring, or rather that strict adherence to principle, with which they hesitated not to avow the convictions they felt, though new and unpopular doctrines; and the firmness with which they stood their ground against the voice of numbers, and the cry of schism, innovation, heresy. Yes, we repeat it, who are the men that imitate the first reformers? It is bringing strange names into fellowship, but it is nevertheless true, that Priestley was the Luther of his times.*

* "You say the petitioners are innovators. They deny this, and say they are antiquarians, only not superstitious enough to prefer the rust to the medal. But without availing themselves of this, they prove that the love of novelty is natural, that it puts men on inventing some things, and improving others; that new discoveries by the people call for new limitations, protections, laws from the state; that the yearly assembling of the states is an allowance of the necessity of abrogating some laws, reforming others, and making new ones. That therefore innovation is neither foreign from the nature of things in general, nor from the British constitution in particular; and they might add that almost all the great men, that have appeared in the world have owed their reputation to their skill in innovating. Their names, their busts, their books, their eulogiums, diffused through all countries, are a just reward for their innovations. When idolatry had overspread the world Moses was the minister of a grand and noble innovation. When time had corrupted the institutions of Moses, Hezekiah innovated again, destroying what even Moses had set up; and when the reformations of others were inadequate, Jesus Christ, ascending his throne, created all things new; twelve innovators went one way, seventy another, their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world, reforming and renovating the whole face of the earth. When wealth had produced power, power subjection, subjection indolence, indolence ignorance, and the pure religion of Jesus was debased, here rises an Alfred, there a Charles; Turin produces a Claude, Lyons a Waldo, England a Wickliff; the courage of Luther,

Still the alarm will be rung in our ears, You have begun to innovate on the popular faith, and you will never know where to stop. To all Protestants, and indeed to most Catholics of the present day, it would be sufficient to reply, You also have begun to innovate on the popular faith, and will not know where to stop, any better than we. But we choose to put our vindication on higher ground. Our prayer to God is, that we may never stop. We admire the declaration introduced by the Polish Unitarians into the preface to their Catechism; "We do not think we ought to be ashamed if in some respects our church improves." We believe with Robinson, that "God has more light yet to break forth out of his holy word;" and besides, it is often a long time after the discovery of an important truth, before some of its most important applications are understood. We have too much confidence in Providence and in human nature to sympathize with those who -

> grow pale
> Lest their own judgments should become too bright,
> And their free thoughts be crimes, and earth have too much light.

A spirit is abroad, as we have said, free, bold, uncompromising and terrible as an army with banners, which is trying the opinions and institutions of the world, as by fire. It is the duty of the wise and good to endeavour to guide this spirit, to restrain its excesses, and above all to

the zeal of Calvin, the eloquence of Beza, the patience of Cranmer, all conspire to innovate again. Illustrious innovators! You pleaded for conscience against custom; your names will be transmitted to all posterity with deserved renown."—*Robinson's Arcana, Miscellaneous Works.* Vol. II, pp. 84, 85.

imbue it with a sincere and earnest love of truth, humanity, and God. But we fear not the issue. We believe that every accession of new light and intelligence will be found to illustrate and enforce the evidences of the Christian revelation, and give mankind a deeper and more living sense of its truth and reality.

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REMARKS

ON THE

SACRED SCRIPTURES,

AND ON

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF.

By ORVILLE DEWEY.

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BELIEF AND UNBELIEF.

It has become very important, as it seems to us, that the advocates of a divine revelation should carefully and accurately define the ground which they undertake to defend. In logical order, this task is preliminary to the defence itself. Our position is to be taken before it is to be maintained. What *is it* to believe in a revelation? Or, in other words, what is the question between the believer and the unbeliever? This we shall undertake to define, in the first place, and then shall offer some general remarks on belief and unbelief.

There are two methods by which mankind may arrive at the knowledge of truth. The one is, by observation, by reflection, by reasoning, by the natural exercise of the human faculties. The other is, by a supernatural communication from heaven; and this is different from, and superior to, reasoning, observation, intuition, impulse, and every known operation of the human mind. Now

we contend that it is in a communication of this nature that our scriptures originated.

But let us consider more particularly the vehicle of this communication — the scriptures. It is on this point that believers differ somewhat among themselves. And it is from rash positions on this subject, or from marking too negligently and too broadly the lines of defence, that the advocates of a revelation expose themselves to the strongest attacks of infidelity. The scriptures, then, it might seem needless to say, are not the actual communication made to the minds that were inspired from Above; but they are a "*declaration* of those things which were most surely believed among them."* They are not the actual word of God, but they are a "record of the word of God."† They are of the nature of a testimony. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."‡ This distinction, obvious as it may seem, is not without its importance.

It is important to make the discrimination, and to say, that the *communication* of light and truth was one thing, and the *record* of that communication another. The communication was divine; the record was human. The manner, the style, the phraseology, the choice of words, the order of thought, the selection of figures, comparisons, and arguments, to enforce the communication, was a human work. It was as purely human, as peculiarly individual in the case of every witness, as his accent, attitude, or gesture, when delivering his message. And, indeed, we might as well demand that Paul's gesture or intonation on Mars' Hill, should be faultless, as to de-

* Luke i. 1. † Rev. i. 2. ‡ John iii. 11.

mand that the style of his letter to the Galatians should be faultless; for, in truth, the action and the accent were as truly a part of the communication, as the words employed to set it forth. We are about to argue for this general position, and in doing so we shall more clearly define and guard it; but we wished to state it with some precision in the outset. If there ever were productions which showed the free and fervent workings of human thought and feeling, they are our sacred records. We know not how it is possible for any one candidly to read, or thoroughly to study them, without coming to this conclusion. And we say, therefore, that the question between the believer and the unbeliever is, not whether the words of this communication are grammatically the best words, not whether the illustrations are rhetorically the best illustrations, not whether the arguments are logically the best arguments; but the question is, whether the communication itself was from God. Let any man admit this, let him admit it in any shape, and though there may be difficulties and disputes, we shall find no difficulty in settling beyond all dispute, truths from the scriptures, of dearer concern to us than all the visible interests of this world.

But is this view of the bible a right and safe one? To this question let us now proceed.

1. Let us, as the first step, proceed to inquire of the scriptures themselves. We say, then, that what has now been stated is the natural, and we might say the unavoidable impression which a reader would take from the perusal of the scriptures. The vehicle of revelation is language. The things we have to deal with are words. They are not divine symbols of thought; they are not

pure essences of ideas; they are words. The vehicle, we say, is language. We shall soon undertake to show, that language is, from its very nature, an imperfect instrument of communication. But, for the present, we only say, that the language of revelation is the natural language of the period to which, and of the men to whom we refer it. The idioms of speech, the peculiarities of style, the connexions and dependences of thought and reasoning, the bursts of feeling, all seem to us as natural in the bible as they are in any other book. We see ideas, indeed, that we ascribe to inspiration; but we see no evidence, we can discern no appearance of any supernatural influence created upon the *style*, either to make it perfect, or to prevent it from being imperfect. Let us compare the scriptures with other writings. If we open almost any book, especially any book written in a fervent and popular style, we can perceive, on an accurate analysis, that some things were hastily written, some things negligently, some things not in the exact logical order of thought; that some things are beautiful in style, and others inelegant; that some things are clear, and others obscure or "hard to be understood." And do we not find all these things in the scriptures? What is a sound and rational criticism but a discernment of just such things as these? What is peculiarity of style but something proceeding from the particular mind of the writer — but something, therefore, partaking of human conceptions? And who has more of this peculiarity of style than John, or Paul? And now suppose that Paul had written a letter to any one of his friends on religion, and had written not in his apostolical character — that he had said, as he sometimes did say, "this is not from

the Lord?" Can any rational man doubt, whether that letter would have exhibited the same style as his recorded epistles?

If such, then, be the natural impression arising from the perusal of the scriptures, we are so to receive them, unless they themselves direct us otherwise. Do they direct us otherwise? Do they any where tell us that the manner of writing, the style, the words, came from immediate divine suggestion, or were subject to miraculous superintendence? To us it is clear that the passages usually adduced in support of these views of inspiration, fall entirely short of the positions they are brought to establish. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and "holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" — these are the passages. Now the question is, whether these declarations refer to the matter of revelation, or to the style; to the substance of the communication, or to the form; to the thing testified, given, spoken, or to the manner of speaking, imparting, testifying. We say, to the matter, the substance, the thing testified. Others insist that reference is had to the style, the form, the manner, also. There is nothing in the words to decide between us, and we must have resort, therefore, to general considerations. We must go to the general aspect and obvious character of the sacred writings. And on this subject we have a statement to make, which is worthy of special observation. So strong is the aspect of naturalness upon the whole face of the scriptures, so marked are the peculiarities of individual thought, manner, and style, that many of the most learned and profound Orthodox scholars have given up the doctrine of immediate suggestion, and retain only that of a general

superintendence. But we surely may remind them, that the scriptures themselves furnish as little warrant for the doctrine of superintendence as for that of suggestion. If the passages before quoted prove any thing with regard to style, they prove immediate suggestion. If they prove nothing on this point, then the bible does not anywhere; for they are the strongest in the bible.

The doctrine of superintendence, undoubtedly, comes not from the scriptures, but from what is thought to be the exigency of the case. It is introduced to save the sacred writings from the charge of possible error; a charge which we shall by and by undertake to show, does not, in anything material, attach to them, on what we think to be a more rational and unincumbered theory. We see no need of supposing the apostles, for instance, to have spoken and written under any other influence than that of truth and goodness — truth supernaturally communicated to them, but not by them supernaturally taught. The teaching, in short, is full of nature and truth. And we should, with as much reason, demand that Paul's speech should have been freed from that impediment or infirmity, which made some among the Corinthians declare it to be "contemptible," as that his style should be freed from those obscurities, those imperfections, in other words, which made Peter say that it is "hard to be understood." And we might as well say, that when his accent or gesture was liable to be wrong, there was a divine superintendence or interference to put it right, as to say this with regard to his written expressions, his figures and illustrations, his style and mode of communication.

2. That there was no supernatural perfection, or accuracy, in the scriptural *style* or mode of communication, we think any one may be convinced by considering, in the next place, the very nature of language.

Human language is essentially and unavoidably an imperfect mode of communication. It is sufficiently correct; but the idea of absolute perfection or infallibility, if it were rightly and rigidly considered, does not and cannot belong to it. We are not merely saying, now, that the style of our christian teachers is not perfect, according to the laws of rhetoric; that it is not perfect Greek. That is admitted on all hands. But we say that it is not perfect, because it cannot be perfect, as an instrument of thought. Perfection and imperfection in this matter are words of comparison. Absolutely, they do not apply to language. Excellence, or, if any one pleases to call it so, perfection in style, is something relative. It is relative, for instance, to the age and country in which it is delivered. What is perfect for one people and period, is not perfect for another. It would happen, then, that even if the sacred style had possessed some unintelligible perfection for its own age, it would have lost it for the next, and for every succeeding age. Is it not felt by every judicious commentator, that the ancient phraseology in which the scriptures are clothed, throws great difficulties in the way of understanding them? Are not these difficulties such, that the mass of mankind cannot, of themselves, understand certain passages, and must receive the explanation of them on trust? To what purpose is it, then, to argue for the infallibility of the sacred style?

The case stands thus. It has pleased God to adopt

human language as the instrument of his communications to men — an instrument sufficiently correct, though not absolutely perfect. We might as reasonably demand that the men should be faultless, as that the style should be faultless. Neither were so. And as the faults of the men do not invalidate the sufficiency of their main testimony, still less would any faults or inaccuracies of their style, figures, illustrations, or arguments, if proved to exist, set aside the great, interesting, and, among Christians, the unquestioned matters of revelation, which they have laid before us.

3. A word, now, in the third place, on the unavoidable or actual concessions, upon this subject, among all intelligent and sober Christians. Let us see if they do not lead us to the same result.

It cannot be denied that there are some slight discrepancies in the sacred narratives. And, indeed, the common and the very just answer to this allegation in our books of evidences, is, that these differences, so far from weakening the testimony, strengthen it, by showing that there was no collusion among the witnesses. Again, it is common now to admit, that the bible is to be interpreted as other books are. But we do not see how it is possible to enter thoroughly into the spirit of this rule, unless the *composition* of the bible is looked upon as a human work. If there was frequent and supernatural interference with the writer's natural mode of expressing himself, such a fact, it seems to us, would seriously disturb the application of the rule laid down, and would, in fact, warrant many of those superstitious and irrational views of the scriptures, which are fatal to just criticism and sound scholarship.

If, then, it be admitted that there are among our sacred books, discrepancies, however slight, in statements of facts, and if the bible is subject to the ordinary rules of criticism on language, the inference seems unavoidable, that these writings, so far as their *composition* is concerned, are to be regarded as possessing a properly human character.

4. But we come now to the great difficulty and objection. It is said that if these views are correct, the bible is a fallible book, and unworthy of reliance. We maintain, therefore, in the fourth place, that the infallibility which many Christians contend for, and upon the defence of which unbelievers are willing enough to put them, is, in our apprehension, unnecessary to the validity and sufficiency of the communication.

What *is* a revelation? It is simply the communication of certain truths to mankind; truths, indeed, which they could not otherwise have fully understood or satisfactorily determined; but truths nevertheless as easy to be communicated as any other. Why, then, is there any more need of supernatural assistance in this case, than in any other? We are constantly speaking to one another without any fear of being misunderstood. We are constantly reading books without any of this distrust — and books, too, written by men in every sense fallible, which the scripture writers, in regard to the revelation made to them, are not. Nay, we are reading books of abstruse philosophy, in the full confidence that we understand the general doctrines laid down. But the matters of revelation are not abstruse. They are designed to be understood by the mass of mankind. They are designed, like the light, to shine upon man's daily path. What if a man

should say he cannot trust the light of the sun, and will not walk by it, because it comes through so earthly and fallible a medium as the atmosphere? The air, certainly, is an imperfect medium of light. There are motes and mists and clouds in it. Yet we have not the least doubt, that we see the sun, and the path that we walk in, and the objects around us. It does not destroy the nature of light that it comes to us through the dense and variable atmosphere; and it does not destroy the nature of divine truth that it comes to us through the medium of human language.

But let us descend to particulars. What particular truth, then, that either does belong to revelation, or has been conceived to belong to it, requires an infallible style for its communication? Not the Messiahship of Jesus, and his living, teaching, suffering, and dying to save us from sin and misery; not the assurance of God's paternal love and mercy and care for us; not the simple but solemn and most glorious doctrine of a future life; not precept, not promise, not warning, nor encouragement, nor offered grace and aid. But suppose it be contended that more belongs to the revelation — "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute." Suppose it be conceded, that the matter of any or every creed that Christians have made, belongs to it. Yet their makers, we presume, will not maintain that supernatural guidance is necessary to set forth these matters. *They* surely cannot feel any particular distrust about the powers of language. They who have made creeds on purpose to remedy the imperfections, or clear up the obscurities, or settle the uncertainties of the scriptural communication — *they* surely are not the persons we have to contend with in this argument.

"But, ah!" it is said, "this sort of reasoning leads to infidelity." "Save us from infidelity," the objector might more truly say. This, at least, is the purpose of our reasonings; and we believe it is their tendency. Unbelievers have derived more plausible and just objections from the prevailing theological assumptions with regard to our sacred books, than from any other quarter. The attacks which are usually made upon the philosophy of Moses, the imprecations of David, the differences among the apostles, the obscurities of Paul, and upon instances of puerility, coarseness, and indelicacy in style, or inappositeness in illustration, are all of this nature. If it were considered that the successive communications which God has made to the world, have borne upon them the signs and marks of their successive ages — if it were considered, that the light, in its visitations to the earth, has struggled through the medium of human imperfection, through mists of prejudice and clouds — often, indeed, gorgeous clouds of imagination, many difficulties and objections of this sort would be removed.

"But how shall we know what is true and what is false; what belonged to the age, and what to the light?" This difficulty is more specious than real. When applied in detail to the scriptures, it will be found to amount to very little. There can be no doubt, for instance, about matters of morality and duty. Indeed, it has often been admitted by our christian apologists, that a revelation was not so much needed to tell us what is right, as to give sanctions for it. Then, again, with regard to these sanctions, with regard to the future good and evil, we believe no one has ever pretended to deny them, or ever will, on the ground that the sacred writers may have

been mistaken. Very few, indeed, do deny them. And so, as to all the absolute doctrines of scripture, there is no dispute about the authority on which they rest. The only question is, whether some of the illustrations are judicious, belonging as they do to the school of Jewish allegory; and whether one or two of the arguments of Paul are logical. But this question, surely, does not touch matters that fairly belong to the very different department of immediate inspiration. "Whoever appeals to reason," it has been justly said, "waves, *quo ad hoc*, his claim to inspiration." When an inspired teacher says to us, "This doctrine is true" — that is one thing — we receive the declaration on his simple authority. But when he says, "I can prove this to you by a series of arguments" — that is another thing. When he says, "this is true, *because*" — the utterance of that word arouses our reason. It is not implicit faith that is then demanded, but an attentive consideration of the force of arguments. The thing argued demands faith; but the argument, from its very nature, appeals to reason; and it is the very office of reason to judge whether the argument is sound and sufficient. And so when a sacred writer says, "This doctrine is true, and it is *like* such a thing, or it may be so illustrated," he appeals to our judgment and taste, and we may, without in the least questioning the thing asserted, inquire into the fitness, force, and elegance of the illustration, allegory, or figure, by which it is set forth.

5. If now any one shall say that this amounts to a rejection of Christianity, we would remind him, since he seems to need instruction more than argument, that many of the brightest lights and noblest defenders of our reli-

gion fully maintain the ground we have taken, to be christian ground. Erasmus says, "It is not necessary that we should refer every thing in the apostolic writings, immediately to supernatural aid. Christ suffered his disciples to err, even after the Holy Ghost was sent down, but not to the endangering of the faith." Grotius says, "It was not necessary that the matters narrated, should be dictated by the Holy Spirit; it was enough that the writer had a good memory." "It is possible," says the learned Michaelis, "to doubt, and even to deny the inspiration of the New Testament, and yet to be fully persuaded of the truth of the christian religion." Because, he argues, the facts being true, the testimony being one of ordinary validity, the religion must be true. On this observation of Michaelis, Bishop Marsh says, "Here our author makes a distinction which is at present very generally received, between the divine origin of the christian *doctrine*, and the divine origin of the *writings* in which that doctrine is recorded." "The wisdom contained in the Epistles of Paul," says Dr. Powell, late Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, "was given him from Above, and very probably the style and composition were his own." Dr. Paley makes the same distinction "In reading the apostolic writings," he observes, "we distinguish between their doctrines and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation, properly so called; yet in propounding these doctrines they were wont to illustrate, support, and enforce them by such analogies, arguments, and considerations as their own thoughts suggested." To the same purpose, Bishop Burnet. "When," says he, "divine writers argue upon any point, we are always bound to believe the conclusions that their reason-

ings end in, as parts of divine revelation; but we are not bound to be able to make out, or even to assent to, all the premises made use of by them in their whole extent, unless it appear plainly that they affirm the premises as expressly as they do the conclusions proved by them."

We have thus endeavored to free the scriptures from the burden of supporting a character, to which, as we believe, they nowhere lay any claim — the character, that is, of being, in every minute particular, perfect *compositions*. The question, we now repeat, the momentous, the most interesting question between the believer and the unbeliever is, whether God has made special and supernatural communications of his wisdom and will to man, and whether the bible contains those communications? To us, it appears of great consequence, that the controversy should be disembarrassed from all extraneous difficulties, and should be reduced to this simple point. We repeat it, therefore, that when prophet or apostle presents himself to us as a messenger from God, we receive him in the simple and actual character, which has been marked out in this discussion. We consider him as saying, "I bear to you a message from God, to which I demand reverent heed; I give you, from divine inspiration, assurance of certain solemn and momentous truths; but I do not say that every word and phrase I use, every simile and allegory and consideration by which I endeavor to explain or enforce my message, is divine, any more than my countenance, speech, and action are divine. The distinction is easy, and you ought not to misapprehend it. I speak to you from God; but still I am a man. I speak after the manner of men, and for the peculiarities of my own manner, mind, country, and age, I do not presume

to make the Universal and Eternal Wisdom answerable." It is as when an earthly government sends its ambassador to a revolted province. The person invested with such a character has a two-fold office to discharge. He has to lay down propositions, to make offers of forgiveness and reconciliation. These are from the government. He has to explain and urge these propositions and offers, by such language, illustrations, and arguments as the exigency requires. These are from himself. "It is thus," might the ambassador of God say, "it is thus that I address the children of men. My message is divine; my manner of delivering, it is human."

And albeit it were a man that spoke thus to us, and however it might be that he spoke after the manner of men, yet if he could say with a voice of authority and assurance, "God is love; like as a father pitieth his children, so God pities you; he watches over you with a kind care; he offers you forgiveness, and redemption from sin; he opens to you the path of immortal life;" — if he could say these things, it would be a message which no words could adequately express. We should not say as the ancient skeptics did of Paul, "His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible," although he should offend our taste, or our prejudices, in every phrase or figure by which he communicated the glorious truth. We should rather, with the Galatians, "receive him as an angel of God," and would kiss the hem of his garment though the storms of every sea, and the dust and stripes of every city had rent and soiled it. There *is* nothing on earth of privilege, distinction, or blessing to compare with this simple faith. How many a stricken and sorrowing mind has been supported and soothed by that holy reliance

How many a bleeding heart has stanched its wounds in that healing fountain. How many a spirit, wearied with the vanities, or worn down with the cares of this world, has sought that blessed refuge. Nor is it trouble, or sorrow, or sickness, or bereavement only that has resorted here, and could go nowhere else; but the boundless, the every craving soul, that sighs for an immortal life and an infinite good, how often has it exclaimed, "To whom shall I go? — Thou hast the words of everlasting life?" To tell us that all which we believe is nothing, because it does not come up to the demands of some technical creed, or for any other reason, seems to us an absurdity and madness of assertion, at which, instead of inveighing, we can only wonder.

We not only believe ourselves, and believe things as matters of divine revelation, that are of transcendent and inexpressible interest, but we are anxious that others should believe. We are anxious, if our pages should fall into the hands of any who are disposed to doubt, to say a few words to them on this great subject of believing and disbelieving. We are of opinion, indeed, though it may seem very presumptuous in us to say so, that the full strength of the argument for Christianity has not yet been exhibited. We think that the clearer developement of certain moral truths, and of the mind itself, is throwing light upon this subject.

But the pages of a tract do not afford space for so wide a discussion. Instead of advancing into this field — and our aim thus far has been only to define its boundaries,— we shall now recede a step, in order to view it in those broader aspects, which must present themselves to men as men, whether believers or unbelievers; which must

present themselves to beings constituted and circumstanced as men are.

We say, then, in the first place, that to all men it is desirable to believe. It is desirable to believe that there is a God; that he is a good being; that he exercises a providence over the earth; that he has made communications of his will to men, both special and ordinary; that Jesus Christ is really a teacher from God; that Christianity, in its pure precepts, its enlightening doctrines, its gracious encouragements, its comforting assurances of God's love, its great revelation of immortality, is true. We say and insist, it is desirable to believe these things. Every man must wish them to be true. At least, every man in his senses, we were ready to say — every good man, certainly, who is not insane, must wish them to be true. They must appear intrinsically desirable to him; desirable for their own sake; desirable, because, if truths, they are most glorious truths. Put skepticism in the place of any of these matters of belief; let atheism stand instead of the acknowledgment of a God; let infidelity be true and Christianity be not true, or let distrust in general be substituted for reliance — and in each of these cases every one must feel, that he has put darkness in the place of light, and covered with blank desolation a region of life and beauty. Candid unbelievers have always acknowledged this. They have wished they could believe. We do not say that the desirableness of this faith is a sufficient sanction for it; we only say for the present that it is desirable.

But we go on, now, to observe in the second place, that a mind penetrated with a just and reasonable admiration for God's works and perfections, is, for that reason, much

more likely to believe in his spiritual communications, in his visitations of mercy and promise to the human race. There is a belief arising from this source, which is intuitive ; and which, although to some it may seem visionary, and sometimes perhaps is so, yet, being *rightly* derived, is capable, we think, of being vindicated, as altogether reasonable and well grounded.

Suppose a man with the bare light of nature to aid him, should come to entertain, as he well might, the most affecting and delightful conceptions of the character of his Maker. Suppose that his mind was often absorbed in admiration of God and of his works; that he should feel, as he stood amidst the fair and beautiful creation, that God's wisdom was infinite, that his love was infinite, that he loved every creature he had made, that his ear of mercy was ever open to the cry of distress and want, that all things praised the gracious and tender kindness of the Creator. And now, should the voice of all things enter into his heart, and fill it with the most intense and impassioned love to the mighty and wonderful Being who made all things, we ask you, whoever you are that are capable of reasoning and feeling, if you would not approve of the emotions of his heart. There can be but one answer. But if you *would* approve of his feelings, let us remind you that those feelings, from their very nature, would be fast rising to reliance, and that reliance would naturally ripen into faith. A heart, swelling with emotions of gratitude and love, would find it easy to believe that the merciful Creator had interposed for the salvation of his perishing children ; that he had not left the soul to die for want of needful provision and care; that he had opened to its

panting desire and its passionate cry, the paths of an immortal life.

An affectionate heart is a confiding heart. A mind filled with the love of God, would feel a kind of assurance that God would not disregard its strongest and holiest aspirations, that he would not turn a deaf ear to its pleadings for light, and grace, and consolation. Such a mind would be ready to say, in the words of the ancient trust, "The Lord will speak, and he will not keep silence." Its prayer would be fast turning to assurance, and its faith to vision. Having the affectionate, that is, the believing disposition, it would have "the witness in itself." Doing "the will of God, it would know of the doctrine."

We believe, that it is thus given as a kind of reward to the most pious und spiritual minds, to have no doubts. And we believe that it is by swerving from such a mind, by departing from the fervent and tender love of God, that some, not to say many, fall into a general skepticism about providence, and the kind intentions of Heaven to its creatures, and its gracious promises of immortal life to the dying. We would not rashly trace speculative results to moral causes, to moral states of mind; that is, we would not measure a man's virtue by his creed. We know that professed unbelievers in the scriptures, for instance, have often possessed great amiableness, and a very high degree of social worth. But have they been equally distinguished for *the love of God?* This is the discriminative quality, of whose efficacy to prevent unbelief we are speaking. We know that doubting and believing spring from many causes; but we do think, that an ardent, generous, confiding piety, such as nature ought to inspire, would hold many minds to a faith, from which

without it they may swerve. And surely he who does not devotedly love the Infinite Parent, lacks the most essential qualification for judging of what that Parent has done or will do, for his children. He who does not pray much, should not judge much; he who does not often and habitually place himself in the light of the divine perfections, should not judge much of their manifestation.

One thing, at least, we think is certain. A bad mind is more likely to disbelieve, than a good mind; a worldly more than a spiritual, an irreligious than a pious mind. A bad mind, estranged from God, averse to restraint, loving indulgence, and desiring impunity in sin, will not like to believe much concerning God's interference with human affairs; will not like to believe much of his inspection of the heart, his providence over the mind, his purpose to reward the good and to punish the guilty.

We do not say that unbelief has always arisen solely from such a cause. But we say, what every one, as a matter of mere logical inference, must admit, that such a cause is peculiarly favorable to it. We say, in fine, that the good states and tendencies of the mind, are much more likely to lead to belief in the great fundamental truths of our religion, than to disbelief.

But we now proceed to our third remark on the general subject of belief and unbelief. We have said that belief is desirable, and that it is natural to every good mind. We now say, that it is indispensable to the mind in its intrinsic nature and absolute wants. We mean, that to the mind by itself considered, to the mind left to itself, the great truths of religion are indispensable.

It is not often that the mind *is* so left; in the experience of some it never is. They pass through life, or they

pass many years of it, without well knowing what they are, or what they need ; without once fully awaking from the sleep of the senses, or recovering themselves from the dreams of worldly cares, to feel what a nature Godhas placed within them. But did they feel this ; did their thoughts sometimes retire to the secret and silent chambers of the soul ; did the urgent and absorbing impression of outward things fade away from the mind, and leave it to itself, it would then be felt, as it will be felt when this world is actually fading from the senses forever, that the great truths of religion are indispensable ; that they are the strength of the soul, without which it can no more be supported, than the body can be supported without its sinews; that they are the pillars of the soul, without which it must fall into irretrievable ruin.

There are some things that *bring* the mind to itself, and seem mercifully ordained by Heaven for this purpose. The long series of disappointments that ends in the extinction of all expectation from this world ; the shock of calamity that breaks down and scatters all wordly reliances ; the times of deep and chastened meditation, when all the riches and ambition and struggles of life pass before the mind as a " vain show," and the more spiritual hours which affliction ordains for us—the hours when the thoughts are all spiritual, when they dwell upon a spiritual world, when this world is all a dream, and the soul looks for its waking to life, to another and future being—these are seasons and scenes, which teach man, as with the voice of God, that nothing but the faith of what is spiritual and immortal can give repose or refuge to him. Pleasure may satisfy the senses, riches may satisfy avarice, and power ambition ; but it must be some spiritual

good which shall satisfy the soul, some enduring good that shall appease its immortal cravings, some boundless good that shall fill its infinite desires. Nay, even sensuality, avarice, and ambition, though but lower wants of our nature, yet partaking as they do of the vastness of the mind with which they are temporarily connected, can find nothing on earth to yield *them* entire satisfaction. How, then, shall the loftier powers, the unbounded demands of the spirit, be ever met by anything less than the invisible and eternal objects of faith.

We say that human nature, in the calm and deep consciousness of what it is, or in that developement which trouble and calamity give it, cannot dispense with these objects of faith — a God, a providence, an offered mercy, and an eternal heaven. There are states or modifications of the mind, in which the want may not be felt; but it is not so with that mind itself, in its essential principles and its legitimate actings. The miser, by himself considered, can, amidst his sordid aims, dispense with loftier principles; the voluptuary, during his short lived pleasures, can dispense with them; the worldling, in his limited sphere, can do without them; but the *man* cannot dispense with them; the *man*, all-conscious, alive, awake, and glowing with the intense workings of thought and feeling, cannot do without them.

It is sometimes said, we know, that believing is very important to the mass of mankind. It has been a skeptical adage indeed, conveying the scornful implication that faith is more needful than wise, and that it is needful, indeed, as the refuge of weakness and superstitious fear. Now we believe that not only the implication, but the statement is altogether false. We believe it may be as-

serted, that if faith is important to the mass of the people, to the loftiest minds it is more than important, it is indispensable. And we repeat, that just in proportion as the mind rises towards this loftiness, just in proportion as it rejects all factitious modifications, and puts on the proper character of human nature, will it find religious faith to be indispensable.

There is, indeed, a kind of unbelief which does itself yield an artificial buoyancy and satisfaction; but it is not the unbelief of calm, reasonable, thoughtful, feeling human nature. It is a scornful, contemptuous, sneering unbelief. It is not the true philosopher, it is not the true man, that so disbelieves; but it is, if there ever were such a thing as demoniacal possession — it is a demon within the man, that sits mocking with insane laughter at the wreck it has made, or scowling with fiendish malignity over the desolation it has spread around it. Such a skeptic was Thomas Paine. But such was not Mr. Hume. From that calm and clear, though mistaken mind, you hear the sighings of human nature over its doubts. "I am affrighted and confounded," says Mr. Hume, "with that forlorn solitude in which I am placed by my philosophy. When I look abroad, I foresee on every side, dispute, contradiction and distraction. When I turn my eyes inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive existence, or to what condition do I return? I am confounded with these questions, and I begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed in the deepest darkness."

Yes, human nature must feel this, amidst the gloom and cheerlessness of skepticism. Why should Mr. Hume

strike out this passage from the later editions of his Treatise on Human Nature? It is honorable to him. We conceive of a man's being a sincere and honest unbeliever. We can conceive of his entertaining such false views of Christianity, as to be induced to reject it. We can conceive of many influences at work upon his mind, to expose him to this result. But we could not conceive of being ourselves unbelievers, without being the most sorrowful and disconsolate of human beings. We should say with Job, in his season of gloomy doubt, "Let the day perish wherein I was born; let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; as for that night let darkness seize upon it, let it be solitary; let no joyful voice come therein." We might be wrong in this complaining, but we could not help it. The birthday of such an existence, would seem to us to deserve no joyful commemoration, if all the thoughts of the mind, all the dear and cherished affections of the heart, if all the blessed aspirations and hopes of our nature were to perish in the grave. And whether they shall actually perish there or not, if we have no assurance given us, such as the scriptures contain, all, to our minds at least — all that rests upon the tomb must be darkness and the shadow of death!

The matter which we have now taken in hand, may not be altogether without practical interest, we have thought, to some who may read our pages. It is a day of inquiry, and of believing and disbelieving of course, to some extent of those terms, and it behoves thoughtful men to consider whether they are inquiring rightly and safely. And if the general reflections we have now offered, are just, this is a matter which is not to be settled in a moment. The qualities of a rational inquirer, and of a ra-

tional doubter, are no ordinary qualities. It is not hasty surmise, nor headlong impulse, nor ready wit, nor flippant illustration, still less, contempt and scorn, or confidence and presumption, that will do here. Let no man think himself qualified to disbelieve, or to doubt, without a fervent and affectionate piety, without much reflection and sober thinking, and especially without understanding that nature in himself, on whose fate he is deciding. It is serious work which such a man has to do; it is a serious question which he lays before him. It is serious, it is momentous even to the interests of this life. For a prevailing skepticism, not to say about the existence of God, but about a providence, about the wisdom and goodness of the power that deals with us, about moral obligation, about retribution, and the promise of future happiness to the virtuous and the good, — a prevailing skepticism, we say, about these things, would be as certainly fatal to the morals and peace of society, as the silent and unseen coming of the pestilence to the health and happiness of our families.

We hold our pen a moment longer, to lay this solemn question, as we think it ought to be laid, before any one who may feel in himself an inclination to skepticism. And the point we wish him to consider is this; "Are you qualified to doubt?" The ordinary spirit that has prevailed in the school of unbelief, we are perfectly certain, has amounted to a total disqualification. Not the self-sufficient, the scornful, the voluptuous, the light minded and slightly informed, are the fit judges in a case like this. We reiterate the question, "Are you qualified to doubt?" The greatest and wisest men, men of the brightest genius, of the most extensive learning and of the most profound,

calm, and retired study, who have investigated the subject as no infidel ever did, since they were examining the very foundations of their hopes — such men have lived and died in this faith. If they had taken it on trust, the case would have been totally different. As it is, we think that they must be no common men who are entitled to deny a faith thus sanctioned. We put the question plainly, then, "Are you an ignorant man? — Are you a worldly man? — Are you a man cherishing and gratifying the secret love of indulgence? — Are you a man averse to religion and prayer? If you are any of these, you are not qualified to disbelieve. For how shall ignorance judge of wisdom, or worldliness of a spiritual religion, or vicious indulgence of immaculate purity, or an irreligious mind of the great, the peculiar, the all-interpreting manifestation of God!"

1st Series. No. 143.

THE

FOURTEENTH REPORT

OF THE AMERICAN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE ANNUAL MEETING,

MAY 29, 1839.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.
JUNE, 1839.

Price 6 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS.....PRINTER.....2 SCHOOL STREET.

FOURTEENTH ANNIVERSARY.

The American Unitarian Association celebrated its fourteenth anniversary on Tuesday evening, May 29th, 1839. The members met for the transaction of business, at half past six o'clock, in the Berry Street Vestry, the Rev. Dr. Nichols, president, in the chair.

The records of the last annual meeting were read.

The Treasurer's Statement of Receipts and Expenditures was then presented, and accepted.

Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the American Unitarian Association, from May 28, 1838, to May 28, 1839.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 28, 1838,	1209 22	
" transferred from the fund for support of the Agency, . . .	553 76	
		$1762 98
From Auxiliary Societies and Subscriptions, ...	2133 50	
" Life Members, ...	292 00	
" Donations, from Societies and Individuals, ...	1357 01	
" Sale of Tracts, ...	300 90	
" Subscribers to General Agency,	1458 00	
		5541 41
		$7304 39

EXPENDITURES.

For Printing Tracts and Paper, . .	$1397 37
" Incidental Expenses . . .	46 82
" Salary of the General Agent, . .	1800 00
" Travelling expenses of do. do. and postage, ...	255 00
" Rent of room for Agent from Jan. 1, 1838, to July 1, 1839, . . .	300 00
Commission for collecting subscriptions for General Agency for 1833, '34, '35, '36, '37, '38, and paid for clerk-hire for making out and adjusting the accounts, ...	378 59
Rev. Mr. Warland for Missionary services in New Hampshire, . .	40 00
" Mr. Walcutt, for do. do. do. . .	50 00
" " Willson, for do. do. do. .	50 00
In aid of the Unitarian Society in Richmond, N. H.	50 00
Missionary Services in New York, Penn., Ohio, Ind., Ky., Mich., Tenn., and Ill.	
Rev. Dr. Kendall, ...	36 00
" A. B. Muzzey, ...	90 00
do. for travelling expenses, .	93 50
" S. Barrett, ...	10 00
" George Ripley, . . .	206 00
" Calvin Lincoln, ...	10 00
" Mr. Thompson, . . .	132 74
" A. D. Jones, ...	20 00
" do. do.	10 00
" Charles Babbidge, . . .	65 00
" Mr. Hosmer, . . .	50 00
" J. P. B. Storer, ...	106 27
" William Gray Swett, . .	50 00
" Warren Burton, ...	25 00

Rev. Mr. Hosmer,	10 00	
" J. F. Clarke,	30 00	
" W. P. Huntington,	250 00	
" C. Nightingale,	100 00	
For supplying Rev. Mr. Green's desk at East Cambridge two Sabbaths,	20 00	
Paid F. Alger in aid Unitarian Society in Washington, D. C.	100 00	
" Asa Daby for 1st Parish in Harvard,	50 00	
" W. & S. Brown, First Unitarian Society in Boylston,	50 00	
" Luther Willson, Missionary services in Houlton, Me.	30 00	
" for aid Unitarian Society in Brooklyn, Conn.	50 00	
" for aid do. do. in Tyngsboro',	50 00	
" for aid do. do. in Standish, Me.,	50 00	
" for aid do. do. in East Village, Lexington,	75 00	
" Mr. Battelle in aid of Unitarian Society in Fall River,	120 00	
		6257 29
Balance,		$1047 10

HENRY RICE.

May 28, 1839.

The following officers for the ensuing year were then chosen.

OFFICERS
OF THE
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.
1839—40.

PRESIDENT.

Rev. Ichabod Nichols, D. D., Me.

VICE PRESIDENTS.

Hon. Joseph Lyman, Mass.
" William Sullivan, Mass.
" Chales H. Atherton, N. H.
" Stephen Longfellow, Me.
Henry Wheaton, Esq. N. Y.
James Taylor, Esq. Penn.
Henry Payson, Esq. Md.
Hon. William Cranch, D. C.
Martin L. Hurlburt, Esq. Penn.
Hon. Samuel S. Wilde, Mass.
" Samuel Hoar, Mass.
Timothy Flint, Esq. La.
Hon. Lemuel H. Arnold, R. I.
Benjamin Bakewell, Esq. Penn.
H. J. Huidekoper, Esq. Penn.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Rev. Samuel Barrett,
" George Ripley,
" Artemas B. Muzzey, } *Directors.*

ev. Charles Briggs, *General Secretary.*
" Samuel K. Lothrop, *Assistant Secretary.*
Henry Rice, Esq. *Treasurer.*

Agreeably to the 10th Article of the Constitution, the following gentlemen were then chosen COUNCILLORS of the American Unitarian Association.

Francis Alger, Esq.
William T. Andrews Esq.
Isaiah Bangs, Esq.
N. A. Barrett, Esq.
William Brigham, Esq.
George Bond, Esq.
E. Cobb, Esq.
C. K. Dillaway, Esq.
Hon. S. Fairbanks,
Rev. F. A. Farley,
Albert Fearing, Esq.
Dr. J. F. Flagg,
Rev. C. Francis,
Rev. Ezra S. Gannett,
Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood,
S. Greele, Esq.
Rev. James D. Green,
Rev. E. B. Hall,
Rev. Alonzo Hill,
James Kendall, D. D.
John Lamson, Esq.
Peter Mackintosh, Esq.
Samuel May, Esq.
Rev. Henry A. Miles,
John Owen, Esq.
Francis Parkman, D. D.
Rev. Ephraim Peabody,
Hon. Jonathan Phillips,
Hon. Stephen C. Phillips,
Rev. J. Pierpont,
John Prentiss, Esq.
L. G. Pray, Esq.
Wm. Pomroy, Esq.
Rev. George Putnam,
Rev. C. Robbins,
John G. Rogers, Esq.
Henry B. Rogers, Esq.
Benjamin Seaver, Esq.
W. R. Sumner, Esq.
Rev. C. Stetson,
Hon. R. Sullivan,
Robert G. Shaw, Esq.
Rev. Moses G. Thomas,
Rev. J. W. Thompson,
Francis O. Watts, Esq.
James Walker, D. D.
Henry Ware, Jr. D. D.
Rev. Jason Whitman,
Hon. Sidney Willard,
Rev. A. Young.

At half past seven o'clock the Association proceeded to the Federal Street Church. Prayers were offered by Rev. Dr. Flint, of Salem. After which the Report of the Executive Committee was read by the General Secretary.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Fourteen years have now elapsed since the formation of this Association. For some time it had the sympathy of but a small part of the denomination. Its means of usefulness were comparatively limited; and it struggled on amidst much opposition and many discouragements. But as its objects and operations became more known, it gained in public favor; and many, who once viewed it with distrust, came forward as its friends and benefactors. And at this time it is receiving encouragement and support from almost every society in the denomination.

The Executive Committee, in presenting this Report, are happy to inform the members of the Association that during the past year they have found much to encourage and animate them in their labors; — that the sphere of their usefulness has been increased, and their efforts in the cause of truth and righteousness have been crowned with success. A kind Providence has blessed us in our work. And we feel that we have much cause for gratitude and devout acknowledgment to the Giver of all good.

From a very extensive correspondence of the Secretary we have collected much valuable information, which will aid us essentially in our future plans and operations. We

have thus been made more fully acquainted with the condition and prospects of our churches, the wants, wishes and trials of our distant brethren, and the progress of pure and practical religion throughout the country. We have learned that there is a growing demand for our preachers in the Southern and Western States, — that many of our faith have gone there from New England, and are in a great measure deprived of the religious privileges they enjoyed here, — that a large and very important part of the inhabitants of those States are far from being satisfied with the popular faith, — that they desire something more rational, and are disposed, nay rejoice, to receive our views.

And from the visits of the Secretary in the Northern and Eastern States, we have become better acquainted with the spiritual wants of our brethren in those parts of the country. And notwithstanding a loud call comes to us from the great West, we feel that there are calls nearer home which must not be disregarded;—that while we attend to the moral growth of the new, we must guard against the moral decay of the old States. And we have the past year done much more than formerly to aid the New England churches. We have, too, felt more sensibly the claims of the South, and have afforded more aid to our Societies there.

TRACT DEPARTMENT.

The demand for our Tracts the past year has been unusually great; and applications have been made for them from almost every state in the Union. They have, it is believed, done much good; — have removed some of the

strong prejudices which exist against us; — have animated the hopes of the believer, confirmed the faith of the doubting, and reclaimed the infidel. In remote and new parts of the country, where the voice of the preacher could seldom be heard, these silent messengers of divine truth have spoken lessons of comfort and hope to many an inquiring mind and anxious heart. And many a descendant of the Pilgrims in those places has welcomed them to his lonely habitation with gladness; and on every returning Sabbath they have been faithfully and profitably read in the family circle.

The Committee have published several Tracts explanatory of our views of religion. They have perceived a great want of such; for scarcely a letter comes to the Secretary's office that does not remind us that we are yet a persecuted denomination — that we are not unfrequently denied Christian privileges, and the Christian name — that over a large part of the United States our doctrines are grossly misrepresented, and opinions laid to our charge which we utterly disclaim. Truth, therefore, and justice require that we should strive yet more and more to make our views known — that no portion of that light which God has given us should be hid; and that we should especially shed around us the light of a Christian example in our writings and in our lives; that others, seeing our good works, may be led to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

The number of Tracts published during the year, together with reprints of seven, is about 70.000. They are on the following subjects; "The duty of promoting Christianity by the circulation of Books," by Henry Ware, Jr. "The Future Life," by Wm. E. Channing. "Re-

pentance the ground of Forgiveness," by Joseph Hutton, of London. "Reason and Revelation," by A. A. Livermore. "Fidelity in Duty, not accuracy in Belief, our test of the Christian Character," by Andrew P. Peabody. "The Unitarian Reform," by James F. Clarke. "Truths joined by God not to be sundered by man," by Samuel Osgood. "The worship of the Father a service of gratitude and joy," by Wm. E. Channing. "On the Atonement," by Edward B. Hall. "Unitarianism vindicated against the charge of Skeptical Tendencies," by James Walker. "Belief and Unbelief," by Orville Dewey. These with the Annual Report, constitute the 12th Volume of our Tracts.

AUXILIARY ASSOCIATIONS.

The Committee attach great importance to Auxiliary Associations. They regard them as among the best means of diffusing Christian knowledge and promoting union, sympathy, and benevolent effort in our parishes. The Secretary has devoted much of his time to delivering addresses and forming such associations. The number formed the past year is thirty-three.

Four years ago about two thousand of the Tracts were taken by the Auxiliaries, and the number taken by them the last year was nearly five thousand.

The New Hampshire Association is connected with us, and receives its Tracts from our depository. It is not large; but its members are active and deeply engaged in promoting its objects. Its funds are devoted to missionary objects in that State.

During the past year, a Convention of the clergy of our

denomination in Maine was formed for the purpose of awakening in their respective societies an interest in the religious wants of the State. They have requested the Secretary to visit all their parishes, and form Associations, which are to be auxiliary to this Association. The funds raised by those Associations will be paid to our Treasurer, with the understanding that they are to be drawn out by the Standing Committee of the Convention for the support of missionaries and destitute societies in Maine. We rejoice at these truly Christian efforts of our brethren in the neighboring States. And we sincerely thank them for their sympathy and co-operation. Such efforts, besides building up the waste places of Zion, and improving the moral condition of others, will not fail to bless those who are engaged in them.

DONATIONS AND LIFE MEMBERS.

Our expenditures the past year have been unusually great. Two months since our appropriations considerably exceeded the funds in the Treasury; but by the liberality of several individuals, and timely aid from Auxiliary Associations, we have been able to meet all demands; and have on hand the means of usefulness for the coming year; not, however, sufficient to meet those wants of the denomination, which we are expected to supply. Several applications for aid have recently been made from destitute societies, which we were obliged, for the present at least, to refuse.

The number added to the list of life members during the year is nineteen. Seven of these were clergymen, and were made life members by the ladies of their re-

spective societies. The whole number of life members is three hundred and twenty-five. The following donations were made the past year. An individual in Dover, N. H. made a donation of three hundred dollars. A lady of this city left us in her will one hundred dollars. A lady of Rev. Dr. Walker's society in Charlestown made a donation of five hundred dollars. And a gentleman in Northampton subscribed fifty dollars a year for ten years. Smaller donations have been made by individuals, by female benevolent associations, and by the ladies of several societies.

DESTITUTE SOCIETIES.

The more we have known of the peculiar wants and trials of destitute societies, the more desirous we have been of affording them assistance; and especially those which have the elements of growth, and consequently require but temporary aid.

Deprived, as some of these societies are, particularly in distant places, of many religious privileges, surrounded by those who deny them Christian fellowship, in whose churches they cannot profitably worship, and whose ministers not unfrequently deny them a seat at the table of our common Lord, and refuse the waters of Baptism to their children, they deserve the sympathy and aid of the more favored societies; — of those whom Providence has blessed with the means of relieving the moral wants of their brethren. We hesitate not to say that it is a Christian duty to feel and manifest an interest in those of our faith who are thus situated. By the golden rule of our Saviour, by our love for mankind, and our regard for

their everlasting welfare, it becomes us to aid such societies in supporting religious institutions.

We have afforded aid the past year to twenty-one destitute societies. About half of these are in New England. The sums granted to each society were from fifty to one hundred dollars.

MISSIONARY OPERATIONS.

The Committee, as they have become more acquainted with the moral condition of the country, and seen the good that has been accomplished by sending abroad able and devoted preachers, have been desirous of extending their missionary operations. And it will be seen from our Reports that within a few years the Association has done much more in this important field of duty than formerly. Four years ago we employed only two missionaries; the year after, seven; the year following that, fourteen; and the last year, twenty-three. This number may seem large to some. And we would remark, that the most of them were employed for short periods, — some for a month or two, and, in two or three instances, for single Sabbaths. They preached in eleven States. Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, Georgia, and Alabama. The most of them were men of experience, and well adapted to the work. They attracted large audiences, formed several societies, which promise to be permanent, administered the ordinances, established Sabbath Schools, and did much to comfort, strengthen, and edify the churches. They were the following: Rev. Mr. Ripley, of Boston; Rev. Mr. Muzzey, of Cambridge Port; Rev.

Mr. Barrett, of Boston; Rev. Mr. Green, of East Cambridge; Rev. Mr. Lincoln, of Fitchburg; Rev. Mr. Wilson, of Westford; Rev. Dr. Kendall, of Plymouth; Rev. Mr. Hosmer, of Buffalo, N. Y.; Mr. B. F. Barrett, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Nightingale, and Mr. Wilson, late of the Divinity School, Cambridge; Mr. Cranch, of Washington, D. C.; Rev. Warren Burton, Rev. Mr. Thompson, of Salem; Rev. Mr. Storer, of Walpole; Rev. Mr. Babbidge, of Pepperell; Rev. Mr. Merrick, of Sandwich; Rev. Mr. Swett, of Boston; Rev. Mr. Jones, of Brighton; Rev. Mr. Emmons, of Meadville, Penn.; Rev. Mr. Clarke, of Louisville, Ky.; and Rev. Mr. Huntington.

Among the places where they preached, are Houlton, Me.; Syracuse, Lockport, Lewiston, Pekin, and Vernon, N. Y.; Philadelphia, and Erie, Penn.; Marietta, Zanesville, Cleveland, and Toledo, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Owensburg, Ky.; Chicago, Peoria, Tremont, Jacksonville, Hillsboro', and several other places in Illinois.

The society at Augusta, Geo. has for some time been destitute of a clergyman. But we are informed that it is about being revived; and proposes building a new church the present season.

The society at Savannah, Geo. has much increased the past winter under the ministrations of Rev. Mr. Thacher; and appears never to have been in so flourishing a condition.

The society at Mobile, Ala., is in a prosperous condition. The labors of Rev. Mr. Simmons, its present pastor, have been peculiarly blessed. He has, indeed, met with much opposition, not to say persecution, from other denominations, but he has met it in a becoming manner; and with a strong conviction that he was proclaiming the

truth as it is in Jesus, preached with great earnestness and effect. His church has been crowded with deeply attentive hearers. And he has done much to promote the cause of truth and piety.

Our views have been embraced to a considerable extent in one of the Southern Colleges. Two of the professors have become deeply interested in them. One is the Professor of Theology; and preaches in the College chapel. He is a man of popular talents, and zealous in the cause; and will, no doubt, exert a powerful influence upon all who hear him.

The most important and flourishing societies in the West, are those at Buffalo, Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis. Rev. Mr. Elliot's society in the latter place has greatly increased since the erection of its church. A correspondent, after giving some account of the condition and prospects of that society, and stating that during the past year forty-three were added to the number of their communicants, and thirty-five to the Sabbath School, remarks thus: "We have increased as a congregation, about one half or more. We have the best music in the city; and our oratorios for the poor this winter, realised $800. *I* am satisfied with this result, and *you* will be when you consider the wind and tide of prejudice that we have to contend with."

The society at Chicago, Ill. has been prospered the past year. An impulse was given to it last summer by the labors of our missionaries, particularly by Rev. Mr. Thompson of Salem. It has raised funds for the support of a minister, and provided a place for public worship. Mr. Nightingale has been preaching there for some time to good audiences; composed mostly of en-

terprising young men from New-England, who are disposed to make great sacrifices for the establishment of religious institutions.

The society at Hillsboro', in that state, continues to increase with the growth of the place. Rev. Mr. Huntington still preaches there and in several of the neighboring towns.

At Cleveland, Ohio, there are a number of devoted Christians of our faith, who are extremely desirous of building up a society, and having a permanent ministry.

The society recently formed at Lockport, N. Y. promises well. It has as yet no church, but proposes building one the present season. Mr. B. F. Barrett has preached there the past winter with great acceptance. He has preached, too, occasionally at Lewiston and Pekin.

At Syracuse, N. Y. a highly respectable society has been established, and a church erected under very favorable auspices. The Rev. Mr. Storer, late of Walpole, has accepted an invitation to become its Pastor, and he enters upon that new field of duty with the prospect of extensive usefulness. All who have preached there have received very favorable impressions respecting the society. One of our missionaries writes thus: "The society at Syracuse is flourishing beyond the most sanguine expectations of its friends. It is founded on the right foundation, and is strong in the affections of the people. The house is crowded with intelligent and devoted hearers, who appear to take a deep interest in religious truth, and to be desirous of illustrating its spirit. I have not known a new society to be more successful in its beginnings. It was perfectly delightful to preach to a con-

gregation, that seemed to hunger and thirst for religious instruction, and who were so zealous to improve their opportunities of acquiring it."

A much esteemed member of the society, in a letter to the Secretary, says: "Our society continues to advance in strength, while opposed with the utmost vehemence. Indeed we daily hear of attacks made upon us approaching to rudeness. Last Sabbath evening the house was so full that many could not find seats, and were thus compelled to leave."

MINISTRY TO THE POOR.

The Committee continue to feel a deep interest in the ministry to the Poor in this city. Though not now connected with the Association as it was at its first establishment, still it is an object of our solicitude and prayers; for we regard no benevolent work of the age more truly Christian and philanthropic. The labors of its devoted ministers continue to be blessed; and the amount of good which they are doing is incalculable. It will be gratifying to its friends to learn that the corner stone of a new chapel has just been laid. And we are happy to state that a gentleman of this city has recently left our association the sum of $1,600 for the use of this ministry.

A similar ministry was much needed in Cincinnati, Ohio; and application was made to us to assist in its establishment. The Committee, feeling the importance of the object, and perceiving that it was undertaken in such a way, and by such men as promised success to the work, did not hesitate to grant the aid required.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

Our correspondence with the "British and Foreign Unitarian Association," has been continued; and we have occasionally exchanged publications.

It gives us pleasure thus to reciprocate favors, and to do all in our power to strengthen the cords of Christian sympathy and brotherhood between those of the same origin and a common faith. We have appointed Rev. Chandler Robbins, one of our Executive Committee, to represent us at the annual meeting of that Association.

The Rev. Mr. Gannett, of this city, attended the last annual meeting as our delegate, and met with a cordial reception, as appears from the following remarks in the report of that meeting.

"As we were unavoidably deprived of the presence of the Rev. E. S. Gannett, at our last anniversary, we are happy to give him the welcome of a brother at this meeting. It will be a source, we trust, of gratifying reflection to all parties, that he has been enabled to appear on this occasion as the delegate of the American Unitarian Association. His presence amongst us has indeed drawn closer, and strengthened with new sympathies the ties that bind us to our American brethren. The services with which Mr. Gannett has most kindly and liberally favored the Unitarian congregations in and about the metropolis, have been warmly welcomed and most highly appreciated; and he will carry with him, when he returns to the United States, the best wishes, and the most affectionate sympathies of his gratified and grateful fellow believers in this land of our common Fathers."

We sincerely hope, at our future annual meetings, to welcome delegates from the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

The Committee, from what they know of the condition and prospects of the denomination, see much that is encouraging—much to inspire hope and confidence in our cause—much to animate us in the glorious work of extending the empire of truth, of imparting religious instruction and Christian influences to those who are exposed to moral dangers, and building up the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of men.

We see much that is favorable to the progress of enlightened views of religion in the state of the times, in the diffusion of knowledge, in the movements of other denominations, and in the modification which their doctrines are now undergoing.

We cannot close without expressing our thanks to the numerous benefactors of the Association—to individuals and communities — to all who have co-operated with us and assisted us in our work. They have thus aided the best and holiest of causes, have made the hearts of many to rejoice, have sent light to those in darkness, and the bread and water of life to those who were ready to perish.

There is in our churches, we are happy to say, a growing interest in the spread of the Gospel—much of a true missionary spirit, which promises happy results. This spirit does, and will, we doubt not, yet more and more afford the means of helping Christians of our faith in the newly settled parts of the country, in supporting religious institutions, and establishing societies.

This creates a demand for more preachers; and that this demand may be answered, it is important among

other things, that more provision should be made for the gratuitous education of pious and able young men for the ministry; and particularly that means should be provided for their education previously to entering upon the study of Theology.

We have in common with other denominations, done something for the cause of religion in the West. But much, very much remains yet to be done. There are many of our brethren in the great Western valley who are in a measure denied the blessings of the Gospel; who look to us for sympathy and aid, and God grant that they may not look in vain. We trust they will not. Nothing is wanting but men and means—preachers well adapted to that field, and funds to aid temporarily in their support. With these, incalculable good would be done to the church and the country. Societies would soon be established in every important place from the Lakes to the Gulph of Mexico, and thousands who are now wedded to the world, would be brought under the influences of the Gospel.

We feel that there is a great responsibility resting upon us as a denomination. For there are spiritual wants throughout the land which we, and we alone can supply. Many, very many will readily embrace Christianity, if rightly explained and presented to them, who would otherwise live without the believer's hope, and go down to the grave unsanctified and unblessed by the religion of Jesus.

The command of our Saviour, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," addresses itself to his disciples in every age; and it bids *us* send this Gospel — this bread that came down from Heaven, which so much blesses *our* condition, to those

whose souls are starving for want of spiritual food. We shall thus be fellow-workers with our Saviour and our Heavenly Father, in blessing and saving mankind.

Rev. A. A. Livermore, of Keene, N. H., rose, and addressed the meeting as follows:

Mr. President, — I move the acceptance of the excellent and interesting Report of our Secretary. I do it, however, with unaffected diffidence, as I stand among those older and more experienced than myself, but my inland situation may give me some indulgence. That circumstance suggests to me that an error prevails among a portion of our denomination in relation to the need of controversy — an error attributable rather to their position, than to their want of interest in the cause, or knowledge of things. Many think and say that the day of debate is over — the battle is fought and the victory won — and that to introduce disputed points is uncalled for and intrusive. It is so in some places, probably in this city and the vicinity, but not generally. Upon large portions of the land the day of controversy has not yet come. As society is constituted among us, every town is a kind of independent republic. It has its own time for revolution, schism, debate. To one place the reform comes this year, to another next, and so on. To many it has not yet come. The controversy therefore has to be waged step by step, from town to town, until the entire country is carried. The exposition and vindication of truth is as needful as it ever was, not perhaps here, but elsewhere.

Doctrinal Tracts continue to have their value. Our views are still grossly misunderstood and misrepresented in many sections. Many are still in the condition of the good lady, who, even after her minister had preached on the Unity and Trinity, asked him what was the difference between him and a professor of a theological seminary of the opposite persuasion. "I think I know," said she, answering her own question, "you believe in the Father, and he believes in the Son." Or of the man, who, when interrogated as to his views, said, "he believed he was a sort of a Uni-Trinitarian." Such profound ignorance of the points of difference is not rare. It is important therefore that efficient means should still be used to spread from town to town those doctrines which we hold to be identical with the Gospel. As this work advances, the ultimate effect is to remove prejudice and promote charity and ameliorate other sects. We help the diffusion of Unitarianism, as a sentiment, if we do not to any wide extent, as a name.

What we do in this cause meets the wants of society. The views we send forth meet with a hearty response. Of this we have evidence in the general Report. We do not meet this evening to mourn over the declining fortunes of Unitarian Christianity, but to plant another landmark of progress. We have abundant evidence that our sentiments satisfy the deep spiritual wants of mankind. From every quarter, city and country, the church of the Messiah and the chapels of the poor, from the well and the sick, we have testimony that Unitarianism is sufficient to live by, and sufficient to die by. What then, sir, are our duties? What but perseverance in the good old way. No new schemes — no extraordinary measures — but

"line upon line and precept upon precept." The wants of the West and the wants of the East alike claim our sympathy and aid. I have already spoken of the state of New England, and the slowly spreading controversy between old and new opinions. But the wants of the West have been more particularly urged upon my attention by the removal of several families from my parish and the vicinity to that quarter. Families have gone to New York, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois. At one place in particular, Rockford, on Rock river, in Illinois, there is quite a colony from Keene and the neighborhood. One man, a flourishing farmer, has said that he would gladly contribute one hundred dollars annually, if he could be provided with the privileges he enjoyed in New England. How important that such should be encouraged, and not suffered to pine away spiritually in the great wilderness! Even those that were comparatively indifferent at home to religious institutions miss something, they hardly know what, when they go to a new country ; and to regain what they have left and lost, are ready to do double as much there as they would have done here. How desirable that their wishes should be encouraged and their wants relieved!

Appeals for the West, sir, are often put upon the grounds of generosity, expediency, policy. It is generous to give and labor for the destitute, but it is something more than generosity. It is politic to diffuse religion as a preservative of free institutions, expedient to take thought for the new and immense communities springing up at the West, but it is something more than policy and expediency. These are good motives, so far as they go, but is it not better to ground our plea on a stronger

basis — the principle of duty? the duty of the strong to help the weak, the rich to aid the poor, the duty of those who possess great privileges to communicate freely unto those that are destitute. Such an appeal to conscience produces a more permanent influence than to rouse the passions, or address the interests of men. It is a duty — solemn and urgent — to enlighten the ignorant, to correct the erring, to chase away the horrors of the superstitious, and comfort with a living faith the misery of the skeptic. Oh, that we felt the full weight of this obligation! Could the spiritual wants of our brethren be laid open before us, and the world of their hearts revealed, how imperative would the duty of assisting them in the great spiritual warfare appear! How needless would words be to enforce the claim! Facts would be the most powerful persuasives. Many of us have friends at the South and West. What parent has not a son, what sister has not a brother, what man has not a friend, that has joined that multitudinous caravan — that continental colony — that vast and ever marching army that has gone to gain bloodless victories over the wild elements of Nature? There is therefore a family appeal — a domestic duty — in behalf of those who have gone beyond our personal and fireside influence. Let us be of good cheer, and go on, and we shall not fail. We cannot fail as long as Truth holds her throne in the heavens, and the human breast is filled with affection and hope.

Rev. Mr. Muzzey, of Cambridgeport, seconded the motion to accept the Report.

Note. — Very imperfect sketches, (from minutes taken at the meeting) are here given of several of the addresses — particularly those of Messrs. Muzzey, Waterston, and Gannett.

It seems to be expected, he said, that those who have visited the destitute places and the missionary field, should communicate the results of their experience. Doubts exist here as to the propriety of sending, unless application for aid first be made. "Why," it is said, "if they do not ask, should we send?" Allowing, for a moment, that they do not apply, still is it the spirit of Christianity that we should therefore do nothing for their salvation? Was not Jesus sent? Were not the apostles sent? Allowing no demand upon us is made, it is yet our duty, if the want exists, to anticipate and prevent it. A limited observation — extending westward to Detroit, and thence to Cincinnati — had convinced him that there is a call, of which we should be aware, if we would place our ear where we could hear it. He would specify Syracuse, N. Y. This is one of the places where it was doubted if anything could be done, because there was no call from thence. The person whom he visited there first, told him that *he did not know of three Unitarians in the city.* This was said within the past year; and now, already, there is a flourishing Unitarian society in Syracuse, a church erected, and a Pastor to be soon installed.

Then, a doubt is sometimes expressed in regard to the real wants of the West. Some had thought that those who go there color their descriptions with the hues of an excited imagination, and build up a world that is baseless. This may be accounted for by the impression made on those who make short visits, and judge from the condition of small places. But go to the large places, abide in them long in the patient discharge of the duty imposed by the responsibilities of laboring there, and then come back and say what are the wants of the West.

We need two things — means and preachers. The

amount of funds annually raised is small in proportion to the wants to which it is applied. The yearly supply of preachers sent from Cambridge, for the New England churches and for other fields, is small. Ought we not to endeavor to increase it? We should regard, too, whom we send. We should send strong, pious, devoted men. The idea that any preacher will do for the West — any one who has failed of success here will do to send there — is a mistake. What is the character of the Western people? They are enterprising, efficient men. Will they be satisfied with dull, inefficient preachers? They are intelligent men. Will they be satisfied with poor discourses? Unless there is warmth and power in the ministrations supplied to them, they will turn away from them as quickly as any audience would here. They are thinking men. They have the boldness to think on religious subjects, and to express their thoughts. At Toledo he became acquainted with an avowed infidel. This man was of that class of unbelievers, who are made so from identifying Christianity with certain erroneous doctrines. He had been one of three who laid out the city of Toledo. In prosecuting this work, one of his colleagues proposed to reserve a part of the ground for churches. To this he consented with reluctance, and only "on condition that, opposite the four lots for churches, they should leave four lots for school houses — that the school houses might be an antidote to the churches." Can such men receive anything irrational? The impression, in such cases, of course is, that Religion and Reason are hostile to each other. Preach rationally — and it will be seen that the church and the school house are not in opposition. Duty and Hope point Westward. As the Magi followed, from

the East, the Star which led them to the sight of the Saviour, so may the day-star arise in our hearts, which shall guide us to do all that we can do, to enlighten and bless the unbelieving, the exposed, and the destitute, in the region of the West.

Mr. R. C. Waterston, of Boston, then addressed the meeting.

When, said he, we consider how dear our views are to us, how inspiring we find them, how simple, how sublime, how elevating, it is natural to ask why they are not more rapidly diffused? If they come from God they must be adapted to the wants of human nature, and if so, why are they not more widely appreciated and more eagerly seized? But, before we go further, let us ask, whether popularity is the test of truth? If so, then Catholicism is truer than Protestantism, Mohammedanism is truer than Christianity, and worldliness is truer than piety. The question then again recurs. Are these views adapted to the wants of the soul, and if so, is there any thing in them which would naturally check their rapid spread? We reply, they are adapted to the deepest wants of man, but not to his superficial desires, and here we have one cause for their comparatively slow progress. A cause which has always hindered the rapid spread of Christianity itself.

We look around and see sin, and feel that it is the most deadly enemy of the soul. We look at the evil doer, and say to him, "Thou art the man" — "God made thee upright, but thou hast sought out many inventions." This is suited to his deepest wants, but not to his superficial desires. Instead of feeling that he has made himself corrupt, would he not rather throw the burden off, and say that he was born so?

Again, when the sinner exclaims, what shall I do to be saved? we reply, "work out your own salvation. Ask and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you." This is adapted to his real wants, but he would rather hear it said, you will be changed by a foreign and irresistible influence.

Again, he exclaims, what is truth? We say "search the Scriptures, for therein are the words of eternal life. Every man standeth or falleth by himself alone. Call no man master, but be able to give a reason for the faith that is in you." But this is a hard task. It is a difficult and laborious thing to compare scripture with scripture, and to form conclusions for onesself after faithful examination. It suits the superficial desires better to say, "Give me a creed; let me have an authority to lean upon."

Now there is this difference between man's deepest spiritual wants and his superficial desires. The superficial desires lie upon the surface. They are, as it were external to the soul. The deep wants lie within. The cares or pleasures of the world may have buried them. Men must be aroused in order to feel their deepest wants, but there is no need to arouse them to make them follow their superficial desires.

In order then to diffuse those views which seem to us so divine, and which are dearer to us than all outward possessions, we must awaken the slumbering energies of men, and to do this, we must not go with empty speculations but with a living piety. And is not this the distinguishing feature of our denomination? not fixing the essentials in dogmas, but in holiness. While we do not underrate the importance of opinions, we consider purity and godliness the essential thing. As regards other de-

nominations, we reject their creeds, but their virtues, their piety we love. We love those who love God, of whatever name or party, for men are other than their creeds. Their views may have a cramping influence, but the natural instincts of a good heart are too powerful to be utterly crushed, thus creeds become elastic and expand with the mind, or rather while the mind assents to them in theory, it has in fact, outgrown them, and contradicts them in practice. Under the strangest speculative views may exist sincere holiness, as when our Western rivers are covered with ice, the deep tide runs forever below, so under the cold incrustations of ancient dogmas may flow warm love and deep piety. We believe that theories may be false and perishable, but love and faith, and virtue, will burn like a heaven-lighted fire, and all who have these will be numbered with the first born of the church, and become heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Among our own views we shall no doubt find some false speculations ; we have not yet traversed the whole empire of truth, we have not searched all the riches of God ; let us, then, ever hold ourselves ready to receive more light, or the unwritten views of our own party may become as narrowing and dogmatic as an absolute creed. Let us ever keep in mind that the great thing is holiness ; blessed are the pure in heart of whatever view, for they shall see God. It is holiness which has given life to the great and good of all names and parties. It is this which elevates and ennobles, which lifts the mind out of itself, renews its spirit, and makes it desire to be more fully conformed to the perfect will of God. Differences of opinion, in our denomination, are consistent with our first principles. Other denominations, when they differ among themselves

depart from their first principles. They demand assent to one creed, we do not. Holiness is our only bond of alliance — love to God and love to man — and never did a holier tie bind fellow-laborers together. This is the inmost life, the divine essence of Christianity. Let us go, then, with this view and arouse the souls of men, that they may feel their real wants. Let us write Holiness to the Lord in all that we do, and then, opening the oracles of God as an infinite treasure-house, say unto all, search for yourselves in full and absolute freedom, fear no human dictation, but drink of the inexhaustible fountains which gush up into everlasting life, and find peace to your souls.

How then shall the views which seem to us highest and best be spread abroad. That which is dear to us, we shall wish to impart to others. If it is valuable for us, it is valuable for all. We must then live up to our views and labor for the spread of God's kingdom. We must not only think, but feel, not only know, but impart. Great truths never will make great progress without great exertion.

Shall we not then do our work? Shall we not build chapels for the poor in our cities? Shall we not send missionaries to the North and the South, the East and the West? Shall we put this holy light under a bushel? or in the golden candlesticks of the church, that it may send its enlivening beams far and wide?

The objection which is made to this is, will not the demand for preachers become greater than we can supply? Suppose that Paul before going over to Macedonia, had delayed for the same reason preaching the glorious truths of Christ. Suppose that he had said — will not the demand for preachers become greater than I can supply? Suppose that Luther, before the great reform, had said —

shall I speak out a word that shall shake the Catholic church? Shall I expose the fallacies and corruptions of the papal system? for if I should, would not the demand for preachers of a purer faith become greater than can be supplied?

But no — the truths that lived in the hearts of Paul and Luther would be spoken. They were God's truths, and belonged to the world. The truths which we have, we have received as a trust, we have not a right to withhold them, we must speak in faith. If we send abroad able and holy men, the demand will supply itself. If not in the present generation, it will in the next. It were better that men should have the truth and read alone in their closets, than that the truth should be withheld. Whatever is true will live. Whatever in our own views is not true, will perish; wherever we strike a divine spark it will be inextinguishable. The mariner still guides his barque by the North Star, notwithstanding the constellation to which it belongs is sometimes called *The Great Bear*. So our views, whatever unkind epithets may be used, will continue to guide many to life and peace. What, though others differ from us? — When Columbus first ploughed the untracked sea — were there not those who opposed, and prayed and threatened? He stood alone. The only man, perhaps, in God's universe of his own opinion. He went on, and a new world opened before him! Let us also go on, the breath of God will press us forward, and the old heavens and the old earth will pass away and all things will become new.

Have we not reason to rejoice and exclaim as did old Latimer, on his way to execution. "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley; for please God, we will this day light such a candle, as shall never go out!"

Dr. Nurse, of Hallowell, Me., next rose, and said: I have never before had the pleasure of attending a meeting of this Association, and shall not probably for a long time to come be so favored again. Under these circumstances, I trust I may be indulged in a remark or two, although I can hardly hope to interest an audience like this, especially after the eloquent and stirring appeals that have just been made.

I have listened with lively interest and satisfaction to the Report that has been read to us this evening, by which it appears that earnest, successful efforts are being made for the spread and extension of liberal Christianity through the country. And the addresses too, of gentlemen who have ably advocated the acceptance of this Report, while they afford concurrent testimony to the encouraging and important fact that Unitarianism is becoming better appreciated and more widely extended, furnish also the strongest inducements to labor in the cause with persevering and increased effort. Sir, it gladdens my heart to hear that so much is doing to spread the knowledge of our peculiar views as Unitarians; for I believe them both true and important. But, shall I be pardoned for saying, that I could have wished to hear more said of the importance of propagating a knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, not as received by one or another peculiar sect, but as held by professing Christians of nearly every denomination. If there are truths — great and all-important truths — lying at the very foundation of the Christian religion, in which men of differing, not to say opposing, sects agree, should they not for that reason be regarded with peculiar favor? Let it never be forgotten, that our great end and aim should be, not the spread of *Unitari-*

anism as such, but so to address the hearts and consciences of men as to produce in them the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And while on all suitable occasions, we boldly proclaim and sustain our own peculiar views of christian doctrine, because we believe them to be the truth as it is in Jesus, let us never omit to dwell mainly upon those solemn truths which none dare reject, however they may pass them by — whose universal prevalence attests their truth.

Do we sufficiently consider and appreciate the fact that all mankind are sinners? I do not mean *naturally depraved*, but *enemies to God by wicked works?* Do we feel the full force of that declaration of the beloved disciple — "*if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" Are our convictions deep and strong that as it was the sins of mankind that alone gave occasion for the dispensation of mercy by Jesus Christ, so the benefits of that dispensation are only promised to those that *repent* of their sins? If so, let us act up to our convictions, and earnestly strive to press home these truths upon the consciences of men; and if others believe them as well as we, let that be but an additional motive for recurring to them the oftener, and insisting upon them the more strongly. Let us show by our conduct that we are laboring, not to build up a sect, but to extend the blessings of that Gospel which "worketh repentance to salvation," — and good men of every denomination, instead of opposing, will bid us God speed.

The meeting was then addressed by Mr. Adam, of Calcutta.

Mr. Adam said, that he had listened with pleasure to

the highly interesting details of the Report that had been read, and to the addresses that had been delivered on the topics which it embraced, but to none of them with greater satisfaction than to the remarks that had fallen from the last speaker, in the spirit and aim of which he cordially concurred. To produce and cherish vital, practical religion is the grand object of this Association, and the best means for the accomplishment of these purposes are the truths held in common by all sincere Christians. He was very far from meaning to undervalue the distinguishing doctrines of Unitarian Christianity. Himself a convert to those doctrines, he prized them as shedding a refreshing light on the system of Christian truth and duty. He had been educated in the Trinitarian doctrines, and had many years ago gone to India for the purpose of teaching them, but when brought into actual contact with the corrupt forms of religion he was desirous of overthrowing, he had felt their insufficiency; and had in consequence abandoned them. This change had exposed him to much obloquy, and had involved him in many controversies, and the tendency of such an ordeal could not be to induce him to underrate the importance and value of those doctrines which he had embraced, and for which from strong and earnest conviction he had contended, and was still prepared to contend. But still he felt that the chief end of all religion, and the special object of Christianity, was the right regulation of the heart and life, that this was the aim of all serious Christians, and that the more steadily and earnestly this object was contemplated by Unitarian Christians, the more akin they would feel to good men of all names, sects and religions, and the more akin would these feel to them.

There was one passage of the Report with which Mr. Adam could not wholly sympathize, viz., that which spoke of Unitarian Christians, as being still, to some extent, a persecuted sect in this country. He did not mean to deny that this was the case. He supposed it to be the fact here, as elsewhere, that in the general intercourse of society, in the promotion of objects of philanthropy, and in the modes of conducting religious controversy, Unitarians were sometimes treated by their opponents with contumely and injustice. But when he looked on this large and intelligent assembly, when he thought of the numerous Unitarian churches in this city, and of the audiences which Sabbath after Sabbath thronged them, when he listened to the discourses preached to those congregations, and bore in mind that they are watched over by pious and devoted pastors, whose labors they know how to value, he could scarcely bring home to his mind, that he was in the midst of a persecuted body of religionists; and he could not avoid comparing in his own mind this state of things with that which he knew to exist in other quarters of the world, where the witness for the truth has sometimes to stand single-handed against hosts of intolerant advocates of a corrupted Christianity, or ignorant and bigoted votaries of a long established system of polytheism and idolatry. Here he saw Unitarian Christianity supported by numbers, by wealth, by associated influence, by the press, and by the pulpit. In India he had known it to be professed only by isolated individuals, the few who avow their sentiments either actively persecuted, or scowled on by intolerance and bigotry, and the remaining few who do not, injured in their moral character and dispositions by the supposed necessity of an external conformity to modes and

systems of worship which their reason and conscience disapprove. Viewed in this light there is often much injustice done to the principles and proceedings of those, who perhaps with many faults and imperfections maintain such an unequal conflict; and in illustration of this he might adduce the example of his late esteemed and venerated friend Rammohun Roy. That distinguished Hindoo reformer becoming impressed with the dignity and excellence of the moral character of the Author of our religion, and with the moral beauty and practical tendency of his instructions, published a series of extracts from the Gospels for the benefit of his countrymen; and in this good work it might have been supposed that he would have engaged the approbation of Christian missionaries. True, he did not go all their lengths. The beautiful and brilliant tints of morning light are not equal to the splendor of the mid-day sun; but beautiful and brilliant they are, and as such are admired and studied by every lover of nature. The morality of the Gospel which Rammohun Roy brought to the notice of his countrymen for the first time with any probability of its receiving attention and producing effect, is an essential element of Christianity, presenting both sound principles and rules for our guidance, and a high, a holy and a perfect example for our imitation, to attract us to their observance. Yet in his humble and unassuming, but sincere and earnest endeavor to make known this morality to his countrymen, he was not encouraged and supported, but discouraged and opposed by Christian missionaries; and the same class of men are those of the present day, who profess to have discovered that his labors have been fruitless, and that his followers have made no approaches to Christianity. If

his labors have proved in any degree fruitful, and if his followers have made any approaches to Christianity, it is in spite of the repulsive and deadening influence exerted by those who are set for the defence and promotion of the Gospel.

Mr. Adam could not permit himself to make a general allusion to the subject, without feeling that he ought to go on to show the particular statements which have been made derogatory to his distinguished friend's character and labors, and to give the answers of which they admit. In a recent publication emanating from the press of this city, he has found allegations advanced which are unjust to Rammohun Roy, and which he is able to correct, both from his personal knowledge of facts, and from the admissions made by the author of the work to which he had referred. — The work is entitled, "Travels in South Eastern Asia, by Howard Malcolm," a gentleman of high character, and towards whom therefore he entertained no feelings but those of respect. In his work there is much shrewd observation, and judicious suggestion and recommendation worthy the attention of missionary societies; but on some topics he has fallen into grave mistakes, which a closer experience and observation would have enabled him to correct; and of these the most obvious are those which relate to Rammohun Roy. After giving a detailed account of a religious service which Mr. Malcolm attended in Calcutta, conducted by Rammohun Roy's followers, the author goes on to say: — "Such is the boasted reformation of Rammohun Roy! Not another congregation of his followers is found in all India! Of his labors as a Reformer this is the sum: — Fifty or a hundred persons rendered negligent of the na-

tional religion, or gathered here because they were so before, without being a whit the better in their private life or public influence; in some cases adding the sins of the Europeans to those of their countrymen, without being disentangled from the horrid system of the Shasters, without being ready, or without having the moral courage to restore to their own wives and daughters, the rights of human nature. — With all the superiority to prejudice and custom boasted by Rammohun Roy, he did nothing for the elevation of the sex." In another passage it is stated, that "a good school would have done more than all that has been accomplished by the establishment of public worship, according to the principles of Hindoo Unitarians, and that the Hindoos of that class "shew no tendency to advance; they have long stood still; and every thing already wears an air of decrepitude and decay." "Already," it is added, "may the undertaking of this truly great man be pronounced a failure."

With regard to Rammohun Roy's followers Mr. Adam did not appear as their unqualified apologist or defender. For some of them he had little respect. Others he esteemed as men of extensive acquirements within the pale of Hindoo learning, and of vigorous intellect; and others for their sincere and ardent benevolence, anxiety to promote the welfare of their countrymen, according to the measure of their light, and willingness to co-operate with others of different religions as far as they could conscientiously do so. When it is said that there is only one congregation consisting of fifty or a hundred persons, it may be asked whether there are many Christian missionaries of whom even this can be affirmed? When it is said that they have been rendered negligent of the national religion,

or have become Hindoo Unitarians because they were negligent before, and that they are now not a whit the better in their private life or public influence, how easy would it be with more justice to retort most of these allegations upon many of the Christian converts found throughout India! When it is alleged that they are not ready or have not the moral courage to restore to their wives and daughters the rights of human nature, and a single example is adduced of a person marrying his daughter to a Kulen brahmin, the injustice is committed of condemning a class for the act of a single individual whom they had neither the power nor the right to control as a father of a family, and whose conduct in this instance, if it is correctly represented, is in direct opposition to the sentiments generally entertained by the body. When it is alleged that the followers of Rammohun Roy have no principle of progression, no love of improvement, and that every thing among them is advancing to decrepitude and decay, Mr. M. entirely overlooks facts which he has himself supplied, and others which are still more notorious. One of the facts which he has himself supplied is that even in the instance of the marriage of a daughter of one of Rammohun Roy's followers to a Kulen brahmin, the young lady is expressly described by himself as having been well educated, reading and writing English, and remarkably intelligent — a description which any one even moderately acquainted with Hindoo society, would know could apply only to a Hindoo female on whose training the most careful and assiduous and unusual attention had been bestowed. Another fact which he has supplied is, that the Reformer, the English organ of Rammohun Roy's followers, conducted by one of themselves,

and the advocate of their peculiar views and measures, was intended chiefly to excite among the Hindoos, a desire for improvement in their civil condition, and that this journal has often contained well written papers against the Charak Puja, against Kulen marriages, and against the other abominations of the Hindoo system, and that it is, doubtless, as at present conducted, a valuable journal. What do these admissions amount to but that Hindoo Unitarians are not the stagnant and inert body, the decaying and retrograde sect, which he has described them to be. Mr. Adam has no hesitation in saying from his own knowledge of them, that whatever faults and imperfections may belong to them, and however they may be wanting in a principle of cohesion among themselves, it would be altogether unjust to regard them in any other light, than as the most intelligent, enlightened, and actively benevolent division of Hindoo society in Calcutta. As another proof of the mental activity and love of improvement, excited among this class, Mr. Adam also mentioned, that shortly before his departure from Calcutta, less than a twelvemonth ago, a Society was formed among the liberal Hindoos of the rising generation — the express objects of which are to strengthen the bonds of fellowship among themselves, to promote the acquisition of knowledge, and to extend the sphere of their usefulness. He attended, in June last, the first meeting of this society, at which upwards of two hundred young men were present, some of whom delivered, in the Bengalee language, most animated and stirring addresses, which prove anything but decrepitude and decay among the liberal Hindoos of Calcutta. These, in fact are the men of all others, through whom it may be hoped that improvement will be

introduced into the frame-work of Hindoo society, and into the systems of thought and action by which it is distinguished.

So much for the liberal Hindoos of Calcutta as a body; and Mr. Malcom's mistakes respecting Rammohun Roy's character and labors, are not less important. He speaks as if a good school would have done more than has been accomplished by the means which he actually employed, implying that Rammohun Roy paid no attention to the important subject of education. Mr. Adam knew that this subject had received much of his attention, and that he had most disinterestedly sought to promote the objects of education, both indirectly, by abstaining from mixing himself up with measures in which he was assured that, in consequence of the prejudices of others, his co-operation would be likely to prove injurious rather than beneficial; and directly, by means which he himself originated and prosecuted at his own expense. Mr. Adam had superintended a school which was established and supported by Rammohun Roy, and which after his death was discontinued. The effects of this institution were salutary, and many young men who now hold respectable and useful places in society, owe to it all the school instruction they had ever received. But this mistake was unimportant compared with the flagrant injustice done to Rammohun Roy's memory by the assertion that with all the superiority to prejudice and custom which he professed, he had done nothing for the elevation of the sex! And this is said of Rammohun Roy, who, of all others out of office, may with confidence be affirmed to have most essentially contributed to the abolition of Suttee burning, who exposed himself equally to the ill will of powerful Europeans

in office, and to that of the bigoted portion of his countrymen, by his opposition to these human sacrifices, when even missionaries, with but few exceptions, were at least silent on the subject; and who with unflinching determination prosecuted this object, in conversation and by the press, by private and by official representations, at one time calling into requisition the stores of his learning to disabuse the minds of his bigoted countrymen, and to protect the rights of property and the lives of his countrywomen; and at another, meeting the objections and removing the fears of the rulers of the country, who apprehended civil commotion from an interference with a cruel and barbarous, but long established institution. By these means he promoted this object, until at last, a benevolent, enlightened, and energetic nobleman, Lord William Bentick, was placed at the head of affairs, who appreciated the demands of civilization and humanity and good government, and abolished the murderous rite throughout the British dominions in India. By this means, from three to four hundred innocent and helpless women have been saved from the burning pile every year, and it is the man, who of all persons in private station most essentially contributed to this great triumph of humanity in favor of the female sex, of whom it is said that he did nothing for the elevation of that sex! Nor is it the lives only of Hindoo widows that he has saved. By a powerful legal argument he defended their right to an adequate provision from the estates of their husbands, of which an unjust construction of Hindoo law, sanctioning the cupidity of interested relatives, had deprived them. His followers have entered fully into his spirit on this subject, and for no one quality of character or disposition of mind are they

more distinguished, than for their anxiety to improve the minds, to vindicate the rights, and to elevate the condition of Hindoo wives and daughters and sisters. Mr. Adam repeated the expression of his entire conviction that there was no intentional misrepresentation; but he could not avoid deeply regreting that Mr. Malcom should without sufficient inquiry, have precipitately adopted such erroneous and unjust views of the character and labors of one, who made it his highest ambition to promote the welfare and improvement of mankind, and who lived, and labored and died for his countrymen.

Mr. Adam could not sit down without adding one other remark. The labors of the Association in this country are extensive and useful, and he did not wish to withdraw any portion of the means so applied. But while other denominations are continuing with laudable zeal to send forth missionaries to every quarter of the globe, and while many are running to and fro that knowledge may be increased, shall we take no part in this great, this Christian movement? He did not forget that one attempt had already been made, and none more lamented its failure than himself; nor did he attach blame to any one that more had not been done. But is it not the duty of the denomination as a body, with increased experience and enlarged means, to renew the effort?

Rev. Mr. GANNETT, of Boston, then rose, and said that he would refer to one topic in the Report — the allusion to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and the fraternal disposition of our brethren professing the same faith, on the other side of the ocean. He had recently spent some time there amid the sympathies and hospitali-

ties of that part of the church. He referred to the reception he had met with, because he went as the accredited and authorized agent of the Association, and it was as their representative, that he was treated in a manner so gratifying. His visit to England had given him an opportunity to see the grounds of some misapprehensions in this country in regard to the denomination there. The impression sometimes taken was, that the English Unitarians are a poor, obscure, weak, heartless, unpromising sect. He did not wonder at such a conception in any one taking a superficial view of it, compared with the prosperity and power of other sects in that country. But upon a more perfect acquaintance the impression would be changed. His own views of the denomination were altered when, having gone back and forward between England and the continent, he had made his fourth visit there. And his ultimate belief was that the Unitarians of Great Britain are a noble set of confessors for the truth of Christ. Compared with those of other sects, their chapels are few and small; yet every where he found them. Should their places of worship be designated in the same manner as those of the Catholic chapels had been, dotted on a map, published in an English paper to show their number, we should be astonished to find how many worship the Father. The English character, on its surface, was cold and repulsive; but, to make use of a figure which another speaker of the evening had introduced,—English sympathies were warm and true under an icy exterior. The preaching of the English Unitarian church might seem, judged by our own standard, tame and wanting in variety; but compared with the pulpit oratory of the Establishment, the performances of the Arch-bishop, of

my Lord the Bishop, the Arch-deacon, &c., — the Unitarian preaching had much more of life. The standard of preaching is different there. The Unitarians were, he said, placed in a disadvantageous position, — between two large hostile bodies — the church and the dissenters; then there were the High and Low Church parties, besides the Evangelical, and the Papal — all united in detestation of Unitarian Christianity. It is impossible for us, at this distance, to conceive of the power of such an Establishment as that of England. It is like the mighty oak, which has spread its ramifications so far and wide, that you cannot tread without pressing on some of its roots, while it has grown up and spread its branches so as to shut out the bright beams of the sun of righteousness. He entertained no respect for the Establishment; learned and pious men indeed were in it, and many doubtless were the saints in heaven who had gone up from it; but the character of the individuals that are or had been connected with it, did not describe those of the institution itself. Its oppressive influence reminds him of a late experiment in France, which, by a condensing process, gave the invalid the benefit of several atmospheres. Such a double pressure is made by the Establishment to weigh on every individual. It might perhaps, answer for a mind in an unhealthy state, but not for one that is sound. Allowance was to be made for these disadvantages, but, notwithstanding, his impression was, that the denomination was depressed and discouraged: that it felt as if progress were hopeless, whatever efforts might be made. But these dark shades are not without some relief. Their sentiments are not confined to persons in the middle orders of society in that kingdom. There is one chapel in

which members of parliament and titled persons attend. This circumstance may seem of little consequence to us, but, according to their custom of thinking, it is not unimportant. In Birmingham, Liverpool, and some other places, there are large societies. It may be worth mentioning, too, in this connexion, that the mayor of Liverpool is a Unitarian, and was elected by a large number of votes without distinction of sect. Our tracts are widely circulated in London. In parochial libraries editions of our tracts are found, and they are read. The condition of the societies is healthy, though not enlarging. The vigilance of the Establishment, and the activity and vigor of the Dissenters, has increased. Yet there is among the Unitarians a great activity of mind on religious subjects. Some thirty or forty years ago the revolutionary state of Europe had given to this spirit something of a political and radical cast, but now, religious discussion is separated from this. Now their preaching has become, like our own, more earnest. Doctrinal discussion there, as here, was but seldom introduced. Again, there was a diversity of opinion among the clergy, the same as in this country. Some have looked into the German theology — some have speculated more than others upon the ideas developed in their own minds — some retain more than others of the old phraseology; — but, notwithstanding, there prevails more of a deep religious spirit and profitable tone of remark. There is much social religious communication in England. Women and children there join in the religious celebrations, or tea-drinkings, as they are called. In Scotland, Unitarian Christianity is in a favorable condition. In Ireland — particularly in the north part — there is a very interesting body of Unitarian ministers. The

churches are strong, and the laity active. He felt more than anywhere else, as if he were among his own brethren at home, when he stood among the Unitarians at Belfast, enjoying Irish hospitalities. In fine the disposition of the Unitarians in Great Britain to greet the American church as of one brotherhood, invites us to cultivate a closer communion, which is encouraged by the facility of intercourse between the two countries. With regard to the common cause, the impression is there, as here, that we must labor together without compromising freedom, but, still more, trust to individual exertion. Every one should account himself as an apostle of the cross. That holy emblem was not to be carried forward by a host, but by each christian warrior, and under this symbol of victory each must go on unto death. In Great Britain they do not regard associations as favorably as we do. They show a preference for the old Presbyterian spirit, as being the most congenial with liberality and independence — each man standing for the truth as individually received. They and we have the same objects and motives. The sympathies of a similar faith and the responsibilities of human welfare rest upon us alike. They are worthy coadjutors; whose character and co-operation gives us a new ground for activity and hope. Never was there more reason for hope than now. Feebly and unworthily have we sustained the work; but some blessing has attended it — and we ought to go on and be faithful unto the end.

After the addresses, which were deeply interesting to a very numerous audience, the Report was accepted by a unanimous vote. The meeting was then closed by singing the "Dismission Hymn."

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1. The name of this Association shall be The American Unitarian Association.

2. The object of this Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

3. Unitarian Christians throughout the United States shall be invited to unite and co-operate with this Association.

4. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription shall be paid; and a subscription of thirty dollars shall constitute a person a member for life.

5. The officers shall be a President, fifteen Vice Presidents, a General Secretary, who shall have the care of all the business and interests of the Association under the control of the Executive Committee, an Assistant Secretary who, in case of the absence or sickness of the General Secretary, shall perform such duties of a Recording and Corresponding Secretary as may require immediate attention, a Treasurer, and three Directors.

6. The Directors, Secretaries, and Treasurer, shall constitute the Executive Committee, who shall meet once in each month, and shall have the direction of the funds and operations of the Association.

7. An annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall deem advisable, of which due notice shall be given, and at which officers shall be chosen, reports be made, and any other business be transacted, which may come before the Association.

8. The Executive Committee shall have power to fill any vacancies which may occur among the officers between any two annual meetings.

9. Any amendments of this Constitution shall be proposed at one annual meeting, and may be accepted at the next anniversary, if two thirds of the members present be in favor of such amendments.

10. There shall also be a Council of the Association consisting of not less than twenty-five, nor more than seventy-five members, to be nominated by the presiding officer, and chosen by a hand vote at the annual meeting, whose duty it shall be, whenever it is necessary, in conjunction with the Executive Committee, to consider and determine what further measures may be taken to increase the usefulness of the Association, by what means they may be carried into execution, and in what manner funds can be provided for the purpose. The Council shall hold a stated annual meeting on the Thursday succeeding the annual meeting of the Association, at four o'clock, P. M. The Executive Committee shall call special meetings whenever they shall deem necessary, or at the request of any five members of the Council; and twelve members shall constitute a quorum. The powers of the Executive Committee with regard to all matters not acted upon by the Council are to remain the same as heretofore.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, September 23, 1826, as amended March 30, 1830.

Resolved, That every member of the Association be entitled to one copy of every tract *of the first and second series*, published by the Association *during the year for which his subscription is entered.*"

Vote of the Executive Committee, passed January 4, 1826.

Voted, That no society be recognised as auxiliary to this

Association, the terms of subscription to which are less than those required in the Constitution of this Association.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, June 20, 1833.

Voted, That the 4th article of the Constitution be so construed, that any one who shall pay thirty dollars for the General agency of the American Unitarian Association, either at once, or by annual instalments within five years, shall be considered a life member.

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

The following Clergymen have been made members for life of the American Unitarian Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

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Alger, Horatio.
Allen, Joseph.
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Bancroft, Aaron, D.D.
Barrett, Samuel
Bartlett, John.
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Bascom, Ezekiel L.
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Brazer, John, D. D.
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Brooks, Charles.
Buckingham, Edgar.
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No. 77. Religious Opinions and Example of Milton, Locke, and Newton. By Rev. Henry Acton, Exeter, England. - - - - - - 6

No. 78. Explanation of Isaiah ix. 6, and John i. 1. By George R. Noyes. - - - - - 3

No. 79. Presumptive Arguments in favor of Unitarianism. By M. L. Hurlburt. - - - - - 5

No. 80. Testimonies from the Neighborhood of the Eternal World on Acceptance with God. By Noah Worcester, D. D. - - - 4

No. 81. Jesus Christ not a Literal Sacrifice. By John Pierpont. - - - - - - - - 4

No. 82. Three Important Questions answered relating to the Christian Name, Character and Hopes. By Henry Ware, Jr. - - - - - 4

No. 83. Mr. Barnard's Second Report of his Service, as a Minister at Large in Boston. - - - 3

No. 84. The Ninth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 27, 1834. - - 6

VOL. VIII.

No. 85. Excuses for the Neglect of Benevolent Efforts considered. By Andrew P. Peabody. - 3

No. 86. Christ the Image of God. By J. W. Thompson. 3
No. 87. The Philosophy of Man's Spiritual Nature in Regard to the Foundation of Faith. By James Walker. - - - - - - - 4
No. 88. The Efficacy of Prayer. By John Brazer. - 4
No. 89. The Foundation of our Confidence in the Saviour. By Alvan Lamson. - - - 4
No. 90. Apologies for Indifference to Religion and its Institutions Examined. By Samuel Barrett. 4
No. 91. Hints on Religious Feelings. By Jason Whitman. - - - - - - - - - 4
No. 92. Piety and Morality. Their Mutual Importance as Elements of Christian Character. By George Whitney. - - - - - - 3
No. 93. The Promise of Jesus to the Pure in Heart. By F. W. P. Greenwood. - - - - 2
No. 94. Christian Unitarianism not a Negative System. By Ezra S. Gannett. - - - - - 4
No. 95. The Tenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 26, 1835. - - - 6

VOL. IX.

No. 96. A Brief Statement and Explanation of the Unitarian Belief. By Orville Dewey. - - 3
No. 97. False Witnesses Answered. By James Freeman Clarke, Louisville, Ky. - - - 2
No. 98. The Existing State of Theology as an Intellectual Pursuit, and Religion as a Moral Influence. By James Martineau, England. - 4
No. 99. Sober Thoughts on the State of the Times, addressed to the Unitarian Community. - 6
No. 100. Doctrinal Distinctions not always Doctrinal Differences. By A. B. Muzzey. - - - 3
No. 101. A Discourse on the Law of the Spiritual Life. By James Walker. - - - - - - 3

No. 102. On Spirituality of Character. By E. Q. Sewall. 5
No. 103. I am the Way. Addressed to those who "Cannot see their way Clear" to observe the Communion. By S. K. Lathrop. - - 3
No. 104. An Argument from Scripture History against the Trinity. By S. G. Bulfinch. - - 3
No. 105. Christianity as a Purely Internal Principle. By Convers Francis. - - - - 4
No. 106. The Christian Doctrine of Retribution. By George R. Noyes. - - - - - 3
No. 107. The Eleventh Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 24, 1836. - - 6

VOL. X.

No. 108. A Discourse on some of the Distinguishing Opinions of Unitarians. By William E. Channing, D. D. 5
No. 109. On Profession of Religion. By Rev. Orville Dewey. 5
No. 110. Thoughts on the Personality of the Word of God. By Noah Worcester, D. D. . . 4
No. 111. The Scriptural Doctrine of Good Works. By Edward B. Hall. 4
No. 112. On the Use and the Meaning of the Phrase "Holy Spirit." By Henry Ware, D. D. 4
No. 113. A Review of Atheism, for Unlearned Christians. By Noah Worcester, D. D. . . 6
No. 114. Virtue, not Happiness, the End of Man's Creation. By James D. Green. . . . 3
No. 115. Why should we labor to extend our Faith? By S. K. Lathrop. 2
No. 116. The History of Christ, a Testimony that the Father is the Only True God and sole Object of Adoration. By W. J. Fox. . . 3

No. 117. Religious and Moral Wants of the West. By William G. Eliot, St. Louis, Missouri. . 3
No. 118. On Denying the Lord Jesus. By the late Bernard Whitman. 6
No. 119. The Twelfth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 30, 1837. . . 6

VOL. XI.

No. 120 "Come over and Help Us." A Letter to Rev. George Putnam. By E. Peabody. . . 4
No. 121. "To the Law and to the Testimony."—A Discourse on the Deference paid to the Scriptures by Unitarians. By James Walker. 4
No. 122. Remarks on Creeds, Intolerance, and Exclusion. By William E. Channing, D. D. . 4
No. 123. Charges against Unitarianism. By E. Peabody. 3
No. 124. A Tribute to the Memory of the Rev. Noah Worcester, D. D. By William E. Channing. 4
No. 125. The Nature, Reality, and Power of Christian Faith. By Henry Ware, Jr. D. D. . . 3
No. 126. The Sunday School. A Discourse pronounced before the Sunday School Society. By William E. Channing, D. D. 4
No. 127. What is Truth? By Rev. Andrew P. Peabody. 3
No. 128. A Young Man's Account of his Conversion from Calvinism. A Statement of Facts. 5
No. 129. True Grounds of Christian Unity. By Rev. George Putnam. 5
No. 130. A Rational Faith competent to the Wants of Man. 4
No. 131. The Thirteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 29, 1838. . . 6

VOL. XII.

No. 132. The Duty of Promoting Christianity by the Circulation of Books. By Henry Ware, Jr. 4
No. 133. The Future Life. By William E. Channing, D.D. 4
No. 134. Repentance the Ground of Forgiveness. By Rev. Joseph Hutton. L.L. D. . . 4
No. 135. The Worship of the Father, a Service of Gratitude and Joy. By William E. Channing, D. D. 5
No. 136. Reason and Revelation. By Rev. A. A. Livermore. 3
No. 137. Fidelity in Duty, not accuracy in Belief, our Test of the Christian Character. By Andrew P. Peabody. 3
No. 138. The Unitarian Reform. By Rev. James F. Clarke. 3
No. 139. Truths joined by God not to be Sundered by Man. By Samuel Osgood. . . . 3
No. 140. On the Atonement. By Edward B. Hall. . 6
No. 141. Unitarianism Vindicated against the Charge of Skeptical Tendencies. By James Walker. 4
No. 142. Remarks on the Sacred Scriptures, and on Belief and Unbelief. By Orville Dewey. . 4
No. 143. The Fourteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 29, 1839. . . 6

SECOND SERIES — 18MO.

No. 1. Objections to Unitarian Christianity Considered. By William E. Channing. 2
No. 2. A Serious and Friendly Address to the Anxious Inquirer. 2
No. 3. One God and One Mediator. 2

No. 4. The Apostles' Creed, as contained in their Public Discourses. 1
No. 5. Two Objections to the right and duty of Free Inquiry and Private Judgment answered. By Jonathan Mayhew. 1
No. 6. Suggestions respecting the Formation of Auxiliaries to the A. U. A. 2
No. 7. Funeral Consolations. By Thomas Emlyn. 3
No. 8. A Pastoral Letter by a Unitarian Minister . 7
No. 9. Ejaculatory Prayer, Daily Use of Scripture. By Joseph Tuckerman. 2
No. 10. On Revivals. By Jonathan Farr. . . . 2
No. 11. Twenty Questions to Trinitarians, with Answers from Scripture. By James Kay. . 2
No. 12. A Funeral Address. By Rev. Samuel Ripley. 1

INDEX TO VOLUME XII.

A.

Adam, Rev. Mr., of Calcutta, his remarks at the Anniversary, 334.
Atonement, Tract 140, by Rev. E. B. Hall, 189.
Auxiliary Associations, the number formed the past year, 311.

B.

British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 319.

C.

Channing, Rev. Dr., his Tract, "The future life," 25, and "The worship of the Father a service of gratitude and joy," 69.
Clarke, Rev. James F., his Tract, "The Unitarian reform," 153.
Councillors of the Association, 367.
Chicago, Ill., some account of the Unitarian Society there, 316.

D.

Destitute Societies, 313.
Dewey, Rev. Orville, his Tract "On the sacred Scriptures, belief and unbelief," 273.
Donations to the Association, 313.

E.

Expenditures and receipts of the Association, 303.

F.

Fidelity in duty, not accuracy in belief, our test of the Christian character, 137.
Future life. 1st. Our virtuous friends, at death, go to Jesus Christ. 2d. The departed go not to Jesus only They go to the great and blessed society which is gathered round him. 3d. They who are born into Heaven go, not only to Jesus, and an innumerable company of pure beings. They go to God, 25.

G.

Gannett, Rev. Ezra S., his remarks at the annual meeting, 344 — reference to him in an extract from the annual report of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 319.

H.

Hall, Rev. E. B., his Tract, 189.
Hutton, Rev. Joseph, L.L. D., of London, his Tract on Repentance, 49.

I.

India—some account of the good effects of Rammohun Roy's instructions and influence there. 342.

L.

Life members, the number during the past year, 312.
Livermore, Rev. A. A., his Tract on Reason and Revelation, 117. His remarks at the Anniversary, 322.
Locke, John, his declaration that all the fundamental truths of Christianity are easy to be understood, 123.

M.

Ministry to the poor in Boston, and in Cincinnati, Ohio, 318.
Missionaries, the number employed by the Association the past year, 314.
Muzzey, Rev. Artemas B., his remarks at the annual meeting, 325.
Mobile, Ala., some account of the Unitarian Society there, 315.

N.

Nourse, Doct., of Hallowell, his remarks at the Anniversary, 333.

O.

Officers of the Association, 306.
Osgood, Rev. Samuel, his Tract, "Truths joined by God not to be sundered by man," 169. I. We first consider the prevalent views of the nature and evidences of religion. 1st. God hath joined together reason and revelation. 2d. The works and the spirit. 3d. Understanding and feeling. 4th. Faith and works. 5th. Religion and morality. II. 1st. The general depravity of man, and his moral capacity not to be separated. 2dly. His free-agency and his dependance upon God. 3rdly. Man hath a spiritual nature, yet he needs a Savior. These two truths are one, yet they have been severed. III. Some of the errors, which men have run into by taking one-sided views of the attributes of God, considered.

P.

Peabody, Rev. Andrew P., his Tract 137—137.

R.

Robbins, Rev. Chandler, a delegate to the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 319.
Rice, Henry, Esq., his report, 303.
"Reason and Revelation," Tract 136 — 117.
"Repentance the ground of forgiveness," Tract 134, by Rev. Joseph Hutton, L.L. D., of London, 49.

S.

Scriptures, remarks on the sacred scriptures, by Orville Dewey, 273.
Savannah, Geo., some account of the Unitarian Society there, 315.
Syracuse, some account of the establishment of the Unitarian Society there, 317.

T.

Tract Department, Annual Report, 309.

Treasurer's Annual Report, 303.

U.

Unitarian Reform, 153. The first great object of the Unitarian Reform is *Christian Liberty.* —Another regards religious opinions. The Unitarian Reform affects also, as is well known, the theory of God's metaphysical existence. The views of man, given by the creeds, Calvinistic or sub-Calvinistic, are equally one-sided and erroneous in the judgment of Unitarians, 153.

Unitarianism vindicated against charge of skeptical tendencies, Tract 141. 1st. It does not follow necessarily that a man believes a particular doctrine merely because he thinks he does. 2dly. Nor because he wishes he did, and is willing to take it for granted. 3dly. It is idle to think of believing a proposition, the terms of which we do not and cannot understand. Unitarians entertain different views from those which have prevailed in some sects respecting what is called "the witness of the spirit." Unitarians believe in the divine origin of the Christian religion, and in its supernatural and miraculous origin.—There is nothing peculiar to Unitarianism, either in what it admits or in what it rejects, which can be justly suspected of skepticism or infidel tendencies, 245.

V.

Volumes, the number published by the Association, 311.

W.

Waterston, Mr. R. C., his remarks at the Annual Meeting, 328.

Walker, Rev. Dr., his Tract 141, "Unitarianism vindicated against the charge of skeptical tendencies," 245.

Ware, Rev. Henry, Jr., D. D., his tract 132, "The duty of promoting Christianity by the circulation of books," 1.

Worship; "Worship of the Father a service of gratitude and joy," 69. 1st. In calling God the Father, I understand that he loves his rational and moral offspring with unbounded affection. 2d In calling God a Father, I understand that he exercises authority over his rational offspring. 3d. When I call God the Father, I understand that he communicates himself, his own spirit, what is most glorious in his own nature to his rational offspring. 4th. I also understand, in calling God the Father, that he destines his rational creatures to immortality, 117.